

Le Minotaur



Volume One

Le Minotaur: Volume One

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Cover picture: *Minotaur in Love* by Anyuta Gusakova

If you have a submission for the **Le Minotaur** feel free to contact the magazine. The Editor in Chief of *Le Minotaur* can be contacted at

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Le Minotaur Magazine ...

Le Minotaur Press of Vancouver is delighted to publish the first edition of ***Le Minotaur*** Magazine which serves to explore the beast in all of us.

The beast is those impulses and urges that ... well you know. The Full Moon is high in the midnight sky and we tingle in those special places. We search out *pleasures of the flesh* that help assuage our impulses and calm our urges ... We all have these feelings even if we are afraid to admit that we do.

Le Minotaur symbolizes those monstrous impulses and urges. The works in this magazine explore different aspects of our pains and pleasures.

Please feel free to submit your short stories, prose, poetry and artwork to

penny_plenty321 @ yahoo.com

There is no fee to submit. There is no writer's fee provided by the journal for those who submit. The publishing rights remain with the author.

Le Minotaur welcomes submissions on a quarterly basis.

The Minotaur Series

The Art of Anyuta Gusakova

Anyuta Gusakova was born and raised in the port city of Vladivostok in the Pacific frontier of the then Soviet Union. Since early childhood art became her land of freedom, imagination and beauty where she would escape from social restraints. At a young age she was influenced by the art of Pablo Picasso, in particular his Minotaurs.

At 14 she graduated from a four-year classical visual art school for gifted children. While obtaining her BFA in linguistics from a local university, Anyuta spent a few years doing internships with a Vladivostok porcelain factories where she learnt all the processes of ceramic manufacturing.

After earning an English Translator Diploma, Anyuta moved to Moscow and enrolled into the *Stroganov University of Art and Design* to focus on classical art forms with major in Sculpture. After graduating from art school she worked on numerous commissions including some peculiar ones like sculpting a model for a chocolate Labrador dog for Russian president Vladimir Putin. His post-graduation experiences gave her invaluable knowledge and upgraded her skill. It also taught her to seek out for her own artistic voice so she could create her own dreams.

While undertaking her Art & Design degree she married a classmate who is a classically trained sculptor and mothered a daughter. About a decade ago

Anyuta immigrated to Canada to pursue her path as an independent professional artist. Anyuta currently resides in Vancouver BC. She has been divorced for several years.

Artist Statement

“I create fantastical worlds inhabited with mythical creatures and toy-like characters. My fantasies are inspired by all the beautiful things in the world and also by magical stories. Then they take a shape of sculptures, paintings, drawings, ceramic and porcelain creations.

I have always been a dreamer. In my early childhood I discovered that my dreams were much more powerful if I gave them a material form, so I began putting pencil to paper. Then, I could share my dreams with others. My first audience were my fellow kindergarten girls, who lined up for a drawing of a princess. I also discovered that beauty of any sort made me happy. Beautiful flowers, animals, songs or even beautiful thoughts filled my heart with joy of existence. It was even better when I managed to create something myself which was pleasing to the eye. I felt that this way I was adding to the world's beauty. I devoted many years to studying art including classical and folk art in order to obtain knowledge and skills of creating harmonious things. First, I learnt how nature does it by creating representational imagery of a natural object. But then I wanted to go beyond that. I started stylizing my subject matter, mixing genres, materials, mediums, concepts, contexts and so on. After cooking it altogether in my artistic

kitchen, I came up with a style of art that is joyful, playful and colorful like a toy but deep and profound at the same time.”

Anyuta

Her artistic Philosophy

I am a dreamer
I have dreams of all sorts:
happy dreams and dark dreams.
dreams for children and dreams for adults,
2D dreams and 3D dreams.
They come to me when I sleep or day-dream.
My job is to materialize them in acrylic
or watercolor,
clay or stone, metal or paper –
whichever form they want to take.
I help the dreams to escape from their ethereal kingdom and fill our world
with their mysterious, irrational beauty.

Anyuta Gusakova, artist



Alabaster Minotaur



Ambling Minotaur



Black Bull



Bunny and Minotaur



Bunny Sitting with Minotaur



Concrete Minotaur



Bunny with Minotaur in the Rain



Captured Minotaur



Girl with Minotaur



Girl with Minotaur Skull



Minotaur and Bunny on a Beach



Minotaur and Bunny



Minotaur in Love



Neo Minotaur



Reclining Geometric Minotaur



Reclining Minotaur



Taming the Minotaur



Wounded Minotaur

Twenty Four Hours in the Life of a Woman

A Novella by Stefan Zweig (1927)

In the little guest house on the Riviera where I was staying at the time, ten years before the *Great War*, a heated discussion had broken out at our table and unexpectedly threatened to degenerate into frenzied argument, even rancor and recrimination. Most people have little imagination. If something doesn't affect them directly, or does not drive a sharp wedge straight into their minds, it hardly excites them at all. On the other hand, if an incident, however slight, takes place before their eyes, close enough for the senses to perceive it, it instantly rouses them to extremes of passion. They compensate for the infrequency of their sympathy, as it were, by exhibiting disproportionate and excessive vehemence.

Such was the case that day among our thoroughly bourgeois company at table, where on the whole we just made equable small talk and cracked mild little jokes, usually parting as soon as the meal was over. The German husband and wife went on excursions and to take snapshots. The portly Dane set out on tedious fishing expeditions. The distinguished English lady returned to her books. The Italian married couple indulged in escapades to Monte Carlo. I lounged in a garden chair or get some work done.

This time, however, our irate discussion left us all still very much at odds, and if someone suddenly rose it was not, as usual, to take a quiet leave of the

rest of us, but in a mood of heated irascibility that, as I have said, was assuming an unbridled frenzied form.

The incident obsessing our little party was odd. From outside, the guest house where the seven of us were staying might have been an isolated villa, with a wonderful view of the rocky beach from its windows, but in fact it was only the cheaper wing of the Grand Palace Hotel to which it was directly linked by the garden, so that we in the guest house were in constant touch with the hotel guests.

And that same hotel had been the scene of an outright scandal the day before, when a young Frenchman had arrived by the midday train, at twenty-past twelve (I can't avoid giving the time precisely because it was of importance to the incident, and indeed to the subject of our agitated conversation). He took a room with a view of the sea, opening straight on to the beach, which in itself indicated that he was in reasonably easy circumstances. Not only his discreet elegance, but his extraordinary and very appealing looks, made an attractive impression.

A silky blond moustache surrounded sensuously warm lips in a slender, girlish face; soft, wavy brown hair curled over his pale forehead; every glance of his melting eyes was a caress. Everything about him was soft, endearing, charming, but without any artifice or affectation. At a distance he might at first remind you slightly of those pink wax dummies to be seen adopting dandified poses in the window displays of large fashion stores, walking-stick in hand and representing the ideal of male beauty, but closer inspection dispelled any impression of foppishness, for ... most unusually

... his charm was natural and innate, and seemed an inseparable part of him. He greeted everyone individually in passing, in a manner as warm as it was modest. It was a pleasure to see his unfailingly graceful demeanor unaffectedly brought into play on every occasion. When a lady was going to the cloakroom he made haste to fetch her coat, he had a friendly glance or joke for every child. He was both affable and discreet. In short, he seemed to be one of those happy souls who, secure in the knowledge that their bright faces and youthful attractions are pleasing to others, transmute that security anew into yet more charm.

His presence worked wonders among the hotel guests, most of whom were elderly and sickly. He irresistibly won everyone's liking with the victorious bearing of youth, that flush of ease and liveliness with which charm so delightfully endows some human beings. Only a couple of hours after his arrival he was playing tennis with the two daughters of the stout, thick-set manufacturer from Lyon, twelve-year-old Annette and thirteen-year-old Blanche, and their mother, the refined, delicate and reserved Madame Henriette, smiled slightly to see her inexperienced daughters unconsciously flirting with the young stranger.

That evening he watched for an hour as we played chess, telling a few amusing anecdotes now and then in an unobtrusive style, strolled along the terrace again with Madame Henriette while her husband played dominoes with a business friend as usual; and late in the evening I saw him in suspiciously intimate conversation with the hotel secretary in the dim light of her office.

Next morning he went fishing with my Danish chess partner, showing a remarkable knowledge of angling, and then held a long conversation about politics with the Lyon manufacturer in which he also proved himself an entertaining companion, for the stout Frenchman's hearty laughter could be heard above the sound of the breaking waves.

After lunch he spent an hour alone with Madame Henriette in the garden again, drinking black coffee, played another game of tennis with her daughters and chatted in the lobby to the German couple. At six o'clock I met him at the railway station when I went to post a letter. He strode quickly towards me and said, as if apologetically, that he had been suddenly called away but would be back in two days' time. Sure enough, he was absent from the dining room that evening, but only in person, for he was the sole subject of conversation at every table, and all the guests praised his delightful, cheerful nature.

That night, I suppose at about eleven o'clock, I was sitting in my room finishing a book when I suddenly heard agitated shouts and cries from the garden coming in through my open window. Something was obviously going on over at the hotel.

Feeling concerned rather than curious, I immediately hurried across, some fifty paces, and found the guests and staff milling around in great excitement. Madame Henriette, whose husband had been playing dominoes with his friend from Namur as usual, had not come back from her evening walk on the terrace by the beach, and it was feared that she had suffered an accident.

The normally ponderous, slow-moving manufacturer kept charging down to the beach like a bull, and when he called: “Henriette! Henriette!” into the night, his voice breaking with fear, the sound conveyed something of the terror and the primeval nature of a gigantic animal wounded to death. The waiters and pageboys ran up and down the stairs in agitation, all the guests were woken and the police were called.

The fat husband trampled and stumbled his way through all this, waistcoat unbuttoned, sobbing and shrieking as he pointlessly shouted the name “Henriette! Henriette!” into the darkness. By now the children were awake upstairs, and stood at the window in their night dresses, calling down for their mother. Their father hurried upstairs again to comfort them.

And then something so terrible happened that it almost defies retelling, for a violent strain on human nature, at moments of extremity, can often give such tragic expression to a man’s bearing that no images or words can reproduce it with the same lightning force.

Unexpectedly, the big, heavy set husband came down the creaking stairs with a changed look on his face, very weary and yet grim. He had a letter in his hand. “Call them all back!” he told the hotel manager, in a barely audible voice. “Call everyone in again. There’s no need. My wife has left me.”

Mortally wounded as he was, the man showed composure, a tense, superhuman composure as he faced all the people standing around, looking at him curiously as they pressed close and then suddenly turned away again,

each of them feeling alarmed, ashamed and confused. He had just enough strength left to make his way unsteadily past us, looking at no one, and switch off the light in the reading room.

We heard the sound of his ponderous, massive body dropping heavily into an armchair, and then a wild, animal sobbing, the weeping of a man who has never wept before. That elemental pain had a kind of paralyzing power over every one of us, even the least of those present. None of the waiters, none of the guests who had joined the throng out of curiosity, ventured either a smile or a word of condolence.

Silently, one by one, as if put to shame by so shattering an emotional outburst, we crept back to our rooms, while that stricken specimen of manhood shook and sobbed alone in the dark as the rest of us slowly laid ourselves to sleep, whispering, muttering, murmuring and sighing.

You will understand that such an event, striking like thunderous lightning before our very eyes, was likely to cause considerable turmoil in persons usually accustomed to an easygoing existence and carefree lifestyle. But while this extraordinary incident was certainly the spark for the discussion that broke out so vehemently at our table, almost bringing us to blows, in essence the dispute was more fundamental. It was a heated conflict between two warring concepts of life. For it soon became known from an indiscrete chambermaid who had read the letter that Madame Henriette had not left alone but, by mutual agreement, with the young Frenchman (for whom most people's liking now swiftly began to evaporate). In his helpless fury, the husband had crumpled letter up and flung it on the floor in his room.

At first glance, of course, it might seem perfectly understandable for this modern day Madame Bovary to exchange her corpulent, provincial husband for a svelte and handsome much young fellow. But what aroused so much indignation in all present was the circumstance that neither the manufacturer nor his daughters, nor even Madame Henriette herself, had ever set eyes on this Casanova before, and consequently their evening conversation for a couple of hours on the terrace, and the hour long session in the garden over black coffee, seemed to have sufficed to make a thirty year old wife of blameless reputation abandon her husband and two young children outright, following a dandy previously unknown to her without a second thought.

This drama was unanimously condemned at our table as perfidious deceit and a cunning maneuver on the part of the two lovers: As we deduced, Madame Henriette must have been conducting a clandestine affair with the young man for some time, and he had merely come here to settle the final details of their flight. In our measure it was out of the question for a decent woman who had known a man a few short hours to run off just like that.

But I admit it amused me to take a different view, and I energetically defended such spontaneity as possible, even probable in a woman who at heart had perhaps been ready to escape all the years of a tedious, disappointing marriage.

My unexpected opposition quickly made the discussion more interesting. It became particularly agitated when both the Germans and the Italians

couples, denied the existence of the *coup de foudre* with positively scornful indignation, condemning it as folly and tasteless romantic fantasy.

Well, it's of no need to go back over every detail of the stormy course of our arguments conducted between soup and dessert: only professionals of the table d'hôte are witty, and points made in the heat of a chance dispute at table are usually banal, since most speakers resort to them clumsily and in haste. It is also difficult to explain how our discussion came to assume the form of insulting remarks so quickly; I think it grew so vehement in the first place because of the instinctive wish of both husbands to reassure everyone that their own wives were incapable of such shallow infidelity and perfidy.

Unfortunately they could find no better way of expressing their feelings than to tell me that no one could speak as I did except a man who judged feminine psyche by a Casanova's random conquests, which came only too cheap. This accusation rather annoyed me, and when the German wife added her penny by remarking instructively that there were 'trustworthy women' on the one hand and 'harlots' on the other, and in her opinion Madame Henriette must have been a harlot.

With this comment I lost my patience and became antagonistic. Such a denial of the obvious fact that at certain times in her life an unhappy woman is delivered up to mysterious feminine powers beyond her will and judgment, I said, merely concealed fear of our creature instincts, and of the hidden and perhaps demonic elements in our nature. Looking at the German Frau I said that some people take pleasure in feeling themselves stronger, purer and more moral than those who they claim are 'easily led astray'.

Personally, I added, I thought it more honorable for a woman to follow her instincts freely and passionately than to betray her husband in his own arms with her eyes closed, as so many did. Such was the Geist of my remarks, and the more the others attacked poor Madame Henriette in our argument now rising to fever pitch, the more passionately I defended her (in fact going far beyond what I truly felt in the case).

My enthusiasm amounted to what in debating might be described as a challenge to the effrontery of the two married couples. As a very inharmonious and out of tune quartet they went for me with such indignant solidarity that the old Dane, who was sitting there with a jovial expression, much like the referee at a football match with stopwatch in hand, had to tap his knuckles on the table from time to time in admonishment.

“Gentlemen, please!” But his admonitions never lasted for long.

Already one of the husbands had jumped up from the table three times, red in the face, and could be calmed by his wife only with difficulty. Perhaps a dozen minutes more and our argument would have ended in violence, had not Mrs C suddenly poured oil on the stormy waters of the conversation.

Mrs C, the elderly, distinguished, white-haired English lady, presided over our table as unofficial arbiter and judge. Sitting very upright in her place, turning to everyone with the same uniform friendliness, saying little and yet listening with the most gratifying and intense interest, she was a pleasing

sight from the purely physical viewpoint, and an air of wonderfully calm composure due to her aristocratic and reserved nature.

Up to a certain point she kept her distance from the rest of us, although she could also show special kindness with tactful delicacy: she spent most of her time in the garden reading books or sometimes played the piano, but she was seldom to be seen in company or deep in conversation with anyone. You scarcely noticed her, yet she exerted a curious influence over us all, for no sooner had she intervened for the first time in our discussion than we all felt, with embarrassment, that we had been too intemperate and boisterous.

Mrs C had made use of the awkward pause when the German gentleman jumped brusquely up and was then induced to sit quietly down again. Unexpectedly, she raised her clear, grey eyes, looked at me indecisively for a moment, and then, with almost objective clarity, took up the subject in her own way.

“If I understand you correctly, you think that a woman like Madame Henriette can unwittingly be cast into a sudden adventure. You think that she can do things that she herself would have thought impossible an hour earlier, and you think she can hardly be held responsible for her actions?”

I responded politely. “I feel sure of it, ma’am.”

“But then all moral judgments would be rendered meaningless. But then any kind of vicious excess could be justified. If you really think that *une crime passionnelle*, as the French call it, is no crime at all, then what is the justice

system and our laws for? It doesn't take a great deal of good will, as you yourself have a remarkable amount of that," she added, with a slight smile, "to see love and passion in every crime, and use that passion to excuse it."

The clear yet almost humorous tone of her words did me good, and instinctively adopting her objective stance I answered half in jest, half in earnest myself: "I'm sure that the judicial system takes a more severe view of such things than I do; its duty is to protect morality and convention without regard for pity, so it is obliged to judge harshly and make no excuses. But as a private person I do not see why I should voluntarily assume the role of a harsh public prosecutor. I'd prefer to appear for the defence. Personally, I would rather understand others than condemn them."

Mrs C looked straight at me for a while with her clear grey eyes, and was silent. I began to fear she had failed to understand what I said, and was preparing to repeat it in English. But with a curious gravity, as if conducting a court room examination, she continued with her questions.

"Do you not think it contemptible ... even shocking ... for a woman to leave her husband and her children to follow some Casanova, when she can't even know if he is worthy of her love? Can you really excuse such reckless, promiscuous conduct in a woman who is no longer in her first youth, and should have disciplined herself to preserve her self-respect, if only for the sake of her children?"

"I repeat, ma'am," I persisted, "that I decline to judge or condemn her in this case. To you, I can readily admit that I was exaggerating a little just now.

Madame Henriette is certainly no heroine, not even an adventuress by nature, let alone *une grande amoureuse*. So far as I know her, she seems to me just an average woman with her own shortcomings. I feel some respect for her because she bravely followed the impulses of her own will. However, I also feel even more pity, since someday, today ... tomorrow, she is sure to be deeply unhappy. She may have acted unwisely and certainly too hastily, but her conduct was not base or mean. I shall challenge anyone's right to scorn this modest and unfortunate woman."

"And what about you yourself? Do you still feel exactly the same respect and esteem for her? Don't you see any difference between the woman you knew the day before yesterday as a respectable wife, and the woman who ran off with a Casanova a day later?"

"No difference at all. Not the slightest, not in the least!"

"*Is that so?*" She instinctively spoke those words in English; the whole conversation seemed to be occupying her mind to a remarkable degree. After a brief moment's thought, she raised her clear eyes to me again, with a question in them.

"And suppose you were to meet Madame Henriette tomorrow, let us say in Nice on her Casanova's arm, would you still greet her?"

"Of course."

"And speak to her?"

“Of course.”

“If... if you were married, would you introduce such a woman to your wife as if nothing had happened?”

“Of course.”

“*Would you really?*” she said, in English again, speaking in tones of incredulous astonishment.

“*Indeed I would,*” I answered, unconsciously falling into English too.

Mrs C was silent. She still seemed to be thinking hard, and suddenly, looking at me as if amazed at her own courage, she said: “I don’t know if I would. Perhaps I might.” And with the indefinable and peculiarly English ability to end a conversation firmly but without brusque discourtesy, she rose and offered me her hand in a friendly gesture. Her intervention had restored peace, and we were all grateful privately to her for ensuring that although we had been at daggers drawn a moment ago, we would not pick them up and could speak to each other with tolerable civility again. The argumentatively charged atmosphere was relieved by a few light remarks.

Although our discussion seemed to have been courteously resolved, its irate bitterness had none the less left a faint, lingering sense of estrangement between me and my opponents in argument. The German couple behaved with reserve, while over the next few days the two Italians enjoyed asking

me ironically, at frequent intervals, whether I had heard anything of '*la cara signora Henrietta*'. Urbane as our manners might appear, something of the equable, friendly good fellowship of our table had irrevocably been lost.

The chilly sarcasm of my adversaries was made all the more obvious by the particular friendliness Mrs. C had shown me since our discussion. Although she was usually very reserved, and hardly ever seemed to invite conversation with her table companions outside meal times, on several occasions she found an opportunity to speak to me in the garden and distinguish me by her attention, for her upper-class reserve made a private talk with her seem a special favor. She sought me out and took every opportunity of entering into conversation with me, in so marked a way that had she not been a white-haired elderly lady I might have entertained some strange, conceited ideas. But when we talked our conversation inevitably and without fail came back to the same point of departure, to Madame Henriette: it seemed to give her some mysterious pleasure to accuse the errant wife of weakness of character and irresponsibility. At the same time, however, she seemed to enjoy my steadfast defence of that refined and delicate woman, and my insistence that nothing could ever make me deny my sympathy for her. She constantly steered our conversation the same way, and in the end I hardly knew what to make of her strange, almost eccentric obsession with the subject.

This went on for five or six days. She never said a word why this kind of conversation had assumed importance for her. But I could not help realizing that it had when I happened to mention, during a walk, that my stay here would soon be over, and I thought of leaving the day after tomorrow. At this

news her serene face suddenly assumed a curiously intense expression, and something like the shadow of a cloud came into her clear grey eyes.

“Oh, what a pity! There’s still so much I’d have liked to discuss with you.” And from then on a certain uneasy restlessness showed that while she spoke she was thinking of something else, something that occupied and distracted her mind a great deal. At last she herself seemed disturbed by this mental distraction, for in the middle of a silence that had suddenly fallen between us she unexpectedly offered me her hand.

“I see that I can’t put what I really want to say to you clearly. I’d rather write it down.” And walking faster than I was used to seeing her move, she went towards the house. Just before dinner that evening I found a letter in her energetic, frank handwriting delivered to my room. I now greatly regret my carelessness with written documents in my youth, which means that I cannot reproduce her note word for word, and can give only the gist of her request: might she, she asked, tell me about an episode in her life? It lay so far back in the past, she wrote, that it was hardly a part of her present existence any more, and the fact that I was leaving the day after tomorrow made it easier for her to speak of something that had occupied and weighed on her conscience for over twenty years. If I did not feel such a conversation was importunity, she would like to ask me for an hour of my time.

The letter, which I outline here, fascinated me to an extraordinary degree. Its English style lent it great clarity and resolution. Yet I did not find it easy to answer. I tore up three drafts before I found my words:

'I am honored by your showing such confidence in me, and I promise you an honest response should you require one. Of course I cannot ask you to tell me more than your heart dictates. But whatever you tell, tell yourself and me the truth. Please believe me: I feel your confidence a special honor.'

My note was delivered to her that evening, and I received the answer next morning:

You are quite right: half the truth is useless, only the whole truth is worth telling. I shall do my best to hide nothing from myself or from you. Please come to my room after dinner. At the age of sixty-seven, I need fear no misinterpretation, but I cannot speak freely in the garden, or with other people near by. Believe me, I did not find it easy to make my mind up to take this step.

During the day we met again at meals, talking pleasantries. But when we encountered each other in the garden she avoided me in obvious confusion, and I felt it both painful and moving to see this white-haired old lady fleeing from me down an avenue lined with pine trees, as shy as a young girl.

At the appointed time that evening I knocked on her door. The door was immediately opened. Her room was bathed in soft twilight, with only the little reading lamp on the table casting a circle of yellow light in the dusk. Mrs C came towards me without any self-consciousness, offered me an armchair and sat down opposite me. I sensed that she had prepared mentally for each of these movements, but then came a pause, obviously unplanned, a

pause that grew longer and longer as she came to a difficult decision. I dared not inject any remark into this pause, for I sensed a strong will wrestling with great resistance here. Sometimes the faint notes of a waltz drifted up from the drawing room below, and I listened intently, as if to relieve the silence of some of its oppressive quality. She too seemed to feel the unnatural tension of the silence awkward, for she suddenly pulled herself together to take the plunge, and began.

“It’s only the first few words that are so difficult. For the last two days I have been preparing to be perfectly clear and truthful; I hope I shall succeed. Perhaps you don’t yet understand why I am telling all this to you, a stranger, but not a day, scarcely an hour goes by when I do not think of this particular incident, and you can believe me, an old woman now, when I say it is intolerable to spend one’s whole life staring at a single point in it, a single day.”

“Everything I am about to tell you, you see, happened within the space of just twenty-four hours in my sixty-seven years of life. I have often asked myself, I have wondered to the point of madness, why a moment’s foolishness on a single occasion should matter. But we cannot shake off what we so vaguely call conscience, and when I heard you speak so objectively of Madame Henriette’s case I thought that perhaps there might be an end to my senseless dwelling on the past, and my constant self-recriminations ... if I could only bring myself to speak freely to someone, anyone, about that single day in my life.

If I were not an Anglican but a Catholic, the confessional would long ago have offered me an opportunity of release by putting what I have kept silent into words, but that comfort is denied us, and so I make this strange attempt to absolve myself by speaking to you today. I know all this sounds very odd, but you have agreed unhesitatingly to my suggestion, and I am grateful.

As I said, I would like to tell you about just one day in my life. All the rest of it seems to me insignificant and would be tedious listening for anyone else. There was nothing in the least out of the ordinary in the course of my life ... until my forty-second year. My parents were rich landlords in Scotland, we owned large factories and leased out land, and in the usual way of the gentry in my country we spent most of the year on our estates but went to London for the season.

It was in London that I met my future husband at a party when I was eighteen. He was a second son of the well-known R... family, and had served with the army in India for ten years. We soon married, and led the carefree life of our social circle: three months of the year in London, three months on our estates, and the rest of the time in hotels in Italy, Spain and France. Not the slightest shadow ever clouded our marriage, and we had two sons who are now grown up.

When I was forty my husband suddenly died. He had returned from his years in the tropics with a liver complaint, and I lost him within the space of two terrible weeks. My elder son was already in the army, my younger son at university, so I was left suddenly entirely alone. Such loneliness was a torment to me as I was used as I was to affectionate companionship. I felt I

could not stay a day longer in the desolate country house where every object reminded me of the tragic loss of my beloved husband, and so I decided that while my sons were still unmarried, I would spend much of the next few years travelling.

In essence, I regarded my life from that moment on as entirely pointless and useless. The man with whom I had shared every hour and every thought for twenty-three years was dead. My children did not need me, and I was afraid of casting a cloud over their youth with my sadness and melancholy, but I wished and desired nothing any more for myself.

On my travels I went first to Paris, where I visited shops and museums out of sheer boredom, but the city and everything else were strange to me, and I avoided company because I could not bear the polite sympathy in other people's eyes when they saw that I was in mourning. How those months of aimless, apathetic wandering passed I can hardly say now; all I know is that I had a constant wish to die, but not the strength to hasten the end I longed for so ardently.

In my second year of mourning, that is to say my forty-second year, I had come to Monte Carlo at the end of March in my unacknowledged flight from time that had become worthless and was more than I could deal with. To be honest, I came there out of tedium, out of the painful emptiness of the heart that wells up like nausea, and at least tries to nourish itself on small external stimulations. The less I felt in myself, the more strongly I was drawn to those places where the whirligig of life spins most rapidly. If you are

experiencing nothing yourself, the passionate restlessness of others stimulates the nervous system like music or drama.

That was why I quite often went to the casino. I was intrigued to see the tide of delight or dismay ebbing and flowing in other people's faces, while my own heart was at such a low ebb. In addition my husband, although never frivolous, had enjoyed visiting such places now and then, and with a certain unintentional piety I remained faithful to his old habits.

It was there in the casino that began those twenty-four hours that were more thrilling than any game, and disturbed my life for years.

I had dined at midday with the Duchess of M, a relation of my family, and after supper I didn't feel tired enough to go to bed yet. So I went to the gaming hall, strolled among the tables without playing myself, and watched the mingled company in my own special way. I repeat, in my own special way, the way my dead husband had once taught me when, tired of watching, I complained of the tedium of looking at the same faces all the time: the wizened old women who sat for hours before venturing a single jetton, the cunning professionals, the *demi-mondaines* of the card table, all that dubious chance-met company which, as you'll know, is considerably less picturesque and romantic than it is always painted in silly novels, where you might think it the *fleur d'élégance* and aristocracy of Europe.

Yet the casino of twenty years ago, when real money, visible and tangible, was staked and crackling banknotes, gold Napoleons and pert little five-franc pieces rained down, was far more attractive than it is today, with a

solid set of folk on Cook's Tours tediously frittering their characterless gaming chips away in the grand, fashionably renovated citadel of gambling.

Even then, however, I found little to stimulate me in the similarity of so many indifferent faces, until one day my husband, whose private passion was for *chiromancy*, that's to say, divination by means of the hand, showed me an unusual method of observation which proved much more interesting, exciting and fascinating than standing casually around. In this method you never look at a face, only at the rectangle of the table, and on the table only at the hands of the players and the way they move. I don't know if you yourself ever happen to have looked at the green table, just that green square with the ball in the middle of it tumbling drunkenly from number to number, while fluttering scraps of paper, round silver and gold coins fall like seed-corn on the spaces of the board, to be raked briskly away by the croupier or shoveled over to the winner like harvest bounty. If you watch from that angle, only the hands change, all those pale, moving, waiting hands around the green table, all emerging from the ever-different caverns of the players' sleeves, each a beast of prey ready to leap, each varying in shape and colour, some bare, others laden with rings and clinking bracelets, some hairy like wild beasts, some damp and writhing like eels, but all of them tense, vibrating with a vast impatience. I could never help thinking of a racecourse where the excited horses are held back with difficulty on the starting line in case they gallop away too soon; they quiver and buck and rear in just the same way.

You can tell everything from those hands, from the way they wait, they grab, they falter; you can see an avaricious character in a claw-like hand and a

spendthrift in a relaxed one, a calculating man in a steady hand and a desperate man in a trembling wrist; hundreds of characters betray themselves instantly in their way of handling money, crumpling or nervously creasing notes, or letting it lie as the ball goes round, their hands now weary and exhausted. Human beings give themselves away in play ... a cliché, I know ... but I would say their own hands give them away even more clearly in gambling. Almost all gamblers soon learn to control their faces. They wear the cold mask of impassivity. They force away the lines around their mouths and hide their agitation behind clenched teeth. They refuse to let their eyes show uneasiness. They smooth the twitching muscles of the face into an artificial indifference, obeying the dictates of polite conduct.

But just because their whole attention is concentrated on controlling the face, the most visible part of the body, they forget their hands, they forget that some people are watching nothing but those hands, guessing from them what the lips curved in a smile, the intentionally indifferent glances wish to conceal. Meanwhile, however, their hands shamelessly reveal their innermost secrets. For a moment, inevitably comes when all those carefully controlled, apparently relaxed fingers drop their elegant negligence. In the pregnant moment when the roulette ball drops into its shallow compartment and the winning number is called, in that second every one of those hundred or five hundred hands spontaneously makes a very personal, very individual movement of primitive instinct. And if an observer like me, particularly well-informed as I was because of my husband's hobby, is used to watching the hands perform in this arena, it is more exciting even than music or drama to see so many different temperaments suddenly erupt.

I simply cannot tell you how many thousands of varieties of hands there are: wild beasts with hairy, crooked fingers raking in the money like spiders; nervous, trembling hands with pale nails that scarcely dare to touch it; hands noble and vulgar, hands brutal and shy, cunning hands, hands that seem to be stammering. But each of these pairs of hands is different, the expression of an individual life, with the exception of the four or five pairs of hands belonging to the croupiers.

Those hands are entirely mechanical, and with their objective, businesslike, totally detached precision function like the clicking metal mechanism of a gas meter by comparison with the extreme liveliness of the gamblers' hands. But even those sober hands produce a surprising effect when contrasted with their racing, passionate fellows; you might say they were wearing a different uniform, like policemen in the middle of a surging, agitated riot. And then there is the personal incentive of getting to know the many different habits and passions of individual pairs of hands within a few days; by then I had always made acquaintances among them and divided them, as if they were human beings, into those I liked and those I did not. I found the greed and incivility of some so repulsive that I would always avert my gaze from them, as if from some impropriety.

Every new pair of hands to appear on the table, however, was a fresh experience and a source of curiosity to me; I often quite forgot to look at the face which, surrounded by a collar high above them, was set impassively on top of an evening shirt or a glittering décolletage, a cold social mask.

When I entered the gaming hall that evening, passed two crowded tables, reached a third, and was taking out a few coins, I was surprised to hear a very strange sound directly opposite me in the wordless, tense pause that seems to echo with silence and always sets in as the ball, moving sluggishly, hesitates between two numbers. It was a cracking, clicking sound like the snapping of joints. I looked across the table in amazement. I was truly startled! I saw two hands such as I had never seen before, left and right clutching each other like doggedly determined animals, bracing and extending together and against one another with such heightened tension that the fingers' joints cracked with a dry sound like a nut cracking open. They were hands of rare beauty, unusually long, unusually slender, yet taut and muscular, very white, the nails pale at their tips, gently curving and the colour of mother-of-pearl. I kept watching them all evening, indeed I kept marveling at those extraordinary, those positively unique hands, but what surprised and alarmed me so much at first was the passion in them, their crazily impassioned expressiveness, the convulsive way they wrestled with and supported each other. I knew at once that I was seeing a human being overflowing with emotion, forcing his passion into his fingertips lest it tear him apart. And then ... just as the ball, with a dry click, fell into place in the wheel and the croupier called out the number ... at that very moment the two hands suddenly fell apart like a pair of animals struck by a single bullet. They dropped, both of them, truly dead and not just exhausted; they dropped with so graphic an expression of lethargy, disappointment, instant extinction, as if all was finally over, that I can find no words to describe it. For never before or since have I seen such speaking hands, hands in which every muscle was eloquent and passion broke almost tangibly from the pores of the skin. They lay on the green table for a moment like jellyfish cast up by

the sea, flat and dead. Then one of them, the right hand, began laboriously raising itself again, beginning with the fingertips; it quivered, drew back, turned on itself, swayed, circled, and suddenly reached nervously for a jetton, rolling the token uncertainly like a little wheel between the tips of thumb and middle finger. And suddenly it arched, like a panther arching its back, and shot forwards, positively spitting the hundred-franc jetton out on the middle of the black space. At once, as if at a signal, the inactive, slumbering left hand was seized by excitement too; it rose, slunk, crawled over to its companion hand, which was trembling now as if exhausted by throwing down the jetton, and both hands lay there together trembling, the joints of their fingers working away soundlessly on the table, tapping slightly together like teeth chattering in a fever ... no, I had never seen hands of such expressive eloquence, or such spasmodic agitation and tension.

Everything else in this vaulted room, the hum from the other halls around it, the calls of the croupiers crying their wares like market traders, the movement of people and of the ball itself which now, dropped from above, was leaping like a thing possessed around the circular cage that was smooth as parquet flooring. All this diversity of whirling, swirling impressions flitting across the nerves suddenly seemed to me dead and dull compared to those two trembling, breathing, gasping, waiting, freezing hands, that extraordinary pair of hands which somehow held me spellbound.

But finally I could no longer refrain; I had to see the human being, the face to which those magical hands belonged, and fearfully ... yes, I do mean fearfully, for I was afraid of those hands! ... my gaze slowly travelled up the gambler's sleeves and narrow shoulders. And once again I had a shock, for

his face spoke the same fantastically extravagant language of extremes as the hands, shared the same terrible grimness of expression and delicate, almost feminine beauty. I had never seen such a face before, a face so transported and utterly beside itself, and I had plenty of opportunity to observe it at leisure as if it were a mask, an unseeing sculpture: those possessed eyes did not turn to right or left for so much as a second, their pupils were fixed and black beneath the widely opened lids, dead glass balls reflecting that other mahogany-colored ball rolling and leaping about the roulette wheel in such foolish high spirits.

Never, I repeat, had I seen so intense or so fascinating a face. It belonged to a young man of perhaps twenty-four, it was fine-drawn, delicate, rather long and very expressive. Like the hands, it did not seem entirely masculine, but resembled the face of a boy passionately absorbed in a game. I noticed none of that until later, for now the face was entirely veiled by an expression of greed and of madness breaking out. The thin mouth, thirsting and open, partly revealed the teeth: you could see them ten paces away, grinding feverishly while the parted lips remained rigid. A light-blond lock of hair clung damply to his forehead, tumbling forwards like the hair of a man falling, and a tic fluttered constantly around his nostrils as if little waves were invisibly rippling beneath the skin. The bowed head was moving instinctively further and further forwards; you felt it was being swept away with the whirling of the little ball, and now, for the first time, I understood the convulsive pressure of the hands. Only by the intense strain of pressing them together did the body, falling from its central axis, contrive to keep its balance. I had never ... I must repeat it yet again ... I had never seen a face in which passion showed so openly, with such shamelessly naked animal

feeling, and I stared at that face, as fascinated and spellbound by its obsession as was its own gaze by the leaping, twitching movement of the circling ball. From that moment on I noticed nothing else in the room. Everything else seemed to me dull, dim and blurred, dark by comparison with the flashing fire of that face, and disregarding everyone else present I spent perhaps an hour watching that one man and every movement he made: The bright light sparkled in his eyes, the convulsive knot of his hands loosening as if blown apart by an explosion, the parting of the shaking fingers as the croupier pushed twenty gold coins towards their eager grasp.

At that moment the face looked suddenly bright and very young, the lines in it smoothed out, the eyes began to gleam, the convulsively bowed body straightened lightly, easily, he suddenly sat there as relaxed as a horseman, borne up by the sense of triumph, fingers toying lovingly, idly with the round coins, clinking them together, making them dance and jingle playfully. Then he turned his head restlessly again, surveyed the green table as if with the flaring nostrils of a young hound seeking the right scent, and suddenly, with one quick movement, placed all the coins on one rectangular space. At once the watchfulness, the tension returned. Once more the little waves, rippling convulsively, spread out from his lips, once again his hands were clasped, the boyish face disappeared behind greedy expectation until the spasmodic tension exploded and fell apart in disappointment: the face that had just looked boyish turned faded, wan and old, light disappeared from the burnt-out eyes, and all this within the space of a second as the ball came to rest on the wrong number. He had lost; he stared at the ball for a few seconds almost like an idiot, as if he did not understand, but as the croupier began calling to whip up interest, his fingers took out a few coins

again. But his certainty was gone; first he put the coins on one space, then, thinking better of it, on another, and when the ball had begun to roll his trembling hand, on a sudden impulse, quickly added two crumpled banknotes.

This alternation of up and down, loss and gain, continued without a break for about an hour, and during that hour I did not, even for a moment, take my fascinated gaze from that ever-changing face and all the passions ebbing and flowing over it. I kept my eyes fixed on those magical hands, their every muscle graphically reflecting the whole range of the man's feelings as they rose and fell like a fountain. I had never watched the face of an actor in the theatre as intently as I watched this one, seeing the constant, changing shades of emotion flitting over it like light and shade moving over a landscape. I had never immersed myself so wholeheartedly in a game as I did in the reflection of this stranger's excitement. If someone had been observing me at that moment he would surely have taken my steely gaze for a state of hypnosis, and indeed my benumbed perception was something like that, I simply could not look away from the play of those features, and everything else in the room, the lights, the laughter, the company and its glances, merely drifted vaguely around me, a yellow mist with that face in the middle of it, a flame among flames. I heard nothing, I felt nothing, I did not notice people coming forwards beside me, other hands suddenly reaching out like feelers, putting down money or picking it up; I did not see the ball or hear the croupier's voice, yet I saw it all as if I were dreaming, exaggerated as in a concave mirror by the excitement and extravagance of those moving hands. For I did not have to look at the roulette wheel to know whether the ball had come to rest on red or black, whether it was still rolling

or beginning to falter. Every stage of the game, loss and gain, hope and disappointment, was fierily reflected in the nerves and movements of that passionate face.

But then came a terrible moment, something that I had been vaguely fearing all this time, something that had weighed like a gathering thunderstorm on my tense nerves, and now suddenly ripped through them. Yet again the ball had fallen back into the shallow depression with that dry little click, yet again came the tense moment when two hundred lips held their breath until the croupier's voice announced the winning number ... this time it was zero ... while he zealously raked in the clinking coins and crackling notes from all sides. At that moment those two convulsively clasped hands made a particularly terrifying movement, leaping up as if to catch something that wasn't there and then dropping to the table again exhausted, with no strength in them, only the force of gravity flooding back. Then, however, they suddenly came to life yet again, feverishly retreating from the table to the man's own body, clambering up his torso like wild cats, up and down, left and right, nervously trying all his pockets to see if some forgotten coin might not have slipped into one of them. But they always came back empty, and the pointless, useless search began again ever more frantically, while the roulette wheel went on circling and

others continued playing, while coins clinked, chairs were shifted on the floor, and all the small sounds, put together a hundredfold, filled the room with a humming note. I trembled, shaking with horror; I felt it all as clearly as if my own fingers were rummaging desperately for a coin in the pockets and folds of my creased garments. And suddenly, with a single abrupt movement, the man rose to his feet opposite me, like a man standing up

when he suddenly feels unwell and must rise if he is not to suffocate. His chair crashed to the floor behind him. Without even noticing, without paying any attention to his surprised and abashed neighbors as they avoided his swaying figure, he stumbled away from the table.

The sight petrified me. For I knew at once where the man was going: to his death. A man getting to his feet like that was not on his way back to an inn, a wine bar, a wife, a railway carriage, to any form of life at all, he was plunging straight into the abyss. Even the most hardened spectator in that hellish gaming hall could surely have seen that the man had nothing to fall back on, not at home or in a bank or with a family, but had been sitting here with the last of his money, staking his life, and was now staggering away somewhere else, anywhere, but undoubtedly out of that life. I had feared all along, I had sensed from the first moment, as if by magic, that more than loss or gain was staked on the game, yet now it struck me like a bolt of dark lightning to see the life suddenly go out of his eyes and death cast its pale shadow over his still living face. Instinctively, affected as I was by his own graphic gestures, I clutched at myself while the man tore himself away from his place and staggered out, for his own uncertain gait was now transferred to my own body just as his tension had entered my veins and nerves. Then I was positively wrenched away, I had to follow him; my feet moved without my own volition. It was entirely unconscious, I did not do it of my own accord, it was something happening to me when, taking no notice of anyone, feeling nothing myself, I went out into the corridor leading to the doors.

He was standing at the cloakroom counter, and the attendant had brought him his coat. But his arms would no longer obey him, so the helpful

attendant laboriously eased them into the sleeves, as if he were paralyzed. I saw him automatically put his hand in his waistcoat pocket to give the man a tip, but his fingers emerged empty. Then he suddenly seemed to remember everything, awkwardly stammered something to the cloakroom attendant, and as before moved forwards abruptly and then stumbled like a drunk down the casino steps, where the attendant stood briefly watching him go, with a smile that was at first contemptuous and then understanding.

His bearing shook me so much that I felt ashamed to have seen it. Involuntarily I turned aside, embarrassed to have watched a stranger's despair as if I were in a theatre ... but then that vague fear suddenly took me out of myself once again. Quickly, I retrieved my coat, and thinking nothing very definite, purely mechanically and compulsively I hurried out into the dark after the stranger."

Mrs C interrupted her story for a moment. She had been sitting calmly opposite me, speaking almost without a break with her characteristic tranquil objectivity, as only someone who had prepared and carefully organized the events of her tale in advance could speak. Now, for the first time, she stopped, hesitated, and then suddenly broke off and turned directly to me.

"I promised you and myself," she began, rather unevenly, "to tell you all the facts with perfect honesty. Now I must ask you to believe in my honesty, and not assume that my conduct had any ulterior motives. I might not be ashamed of them today, but in this case such suspicions would be entirely unfounded. And I must emphasize that, when I hurried after that ruined gambler in the street, I had certainly not fallen in love with him ... I did not

think of him as a man at all, and indeed I was over forty myself at the time and had never looked at another man since my husband's death. All that part of my life was finally over; I tell you this explicitly, and I must, or you would not understand the full horror of what happened later.

On the other hand, it's true that I would find it difficult to give a clear name to the feeling that drew me so compulsively after the unfortunate man; there was curiosity in it, but above all a dreadful fear, or rather a fear of something dreadful, something I had felt invisibly enveloping the young man like a miasma from the first moment. But such feelings can't be dissected and taken apart, if only because they come over one too compulsively, too fast, too spontaneously. Very likely my feelings expressed nothing but the instinct to help with which one snatches back a child about to run into the road in front of a motor car. How else can we explain why non-swimmers will jump off a bridge to help a drowning man? They are simply impelled to do it as if by magic, some other will push them off the bridge before they have time to consider the pointless bravery of their conduct properly; and in just the same way, without thinking, without conscious reflection, I hurried after the unfortunate young man out of the gaming room, to the casino doors, out of the doors and on to the terrace.

And I am sure that neither you nor any other feeling human being with his eyes open could have withstood that fearful curiosity, for a more disturbing sight can hardly be imagined than the way the gambler, who must have been twenty-four at the most but moved as laboriously as an old man and was swaying like a drunk, dragged himself shakily and disjointedly down the steps to the terrace beside the road. Once there, his body dropped on to a

bench, limp as a sack. Again I shuddered as I sensed, from that movement, that the man had reached the end of his tether. Only a dead man or one with nothing left to keep him alive drops like that. His head, fallen to one side, leant back over the bench, his arms hung limp and shapeless to the ground, and in the dim illumination of the faintly flickering street lights any passer-by would have thought he had been shot. And it was like that. I can't explain why the vision suddenly came into my mind, but all of a sudden it was there, real enough to touch, terrifying and terrible. It was like that, as a man who had been shot, that I saw him before me at that moment, and I knew for certain that he had a revolver in his pocket, and tomorrow he would be found lying lifeless and covered with blood on this or some other bench. For he had dropped like a stone falling into a deep chasm, never to stop until it reaches the bottom: I never saw such a physical expression of exhaustion and despair.

So now, consider my situation: I was standing twenty or thirty paces from the bench and the motionless, broken man on it, with no idea what to do, on the one hand wishing to help, on the other restrained by my innate and inbred reluctance to speak to a strange man in the street. The gaslights flickered dimly in the overcast sky, few figures hurried past, for it was nearly midnight and I was almost entirely alone in the park with this suicidal figure. Five or ten times I had already pulled myself together and approached him, but shame or perhaps that deeper premonitory instinct, the idea that falling men are likely to pull those who come to their aid down with them, made me withdraw. In the midst of this indecision I was clearly aware of the pointless, ridiculous aspect of the situation. Nonetheless, I could neither speak nor turn away, I could not do anything but I could not

leave him. And I hope you will believe me when I say that for perhaps an hour, an endless hour, I walked indecisively up and down that terrace, while time was divided up by thousands of little sounds from the breaking waves of the invisible sea ... so shaken and transfixed was I by the idea of the annihilation of a human being.

Yet I could not summon up the courage to say a word or make a move, and I would have waited like that half the night, or perhaps in the end my wiser self-interest would have prevailed on me to go home, and indeed I think I had already made up my mind to leave that helpless bundle of misery lying there ... when a superior force put an end to my indecision. It began to rain. All evening the wind had been piling up heavy spring clouds full of moisture above the sea, lungs and heart felt the pressure of the lowering sky, and now drops suddenly began to splash down. Soon a heavy rain was falling in wet torrents blown about by the wind. I instinctively sheltered under the projecting roof of a kiosk, but although I put up my umbrella gusts of wind kept blowing the rain on my dress. I felt the cold mist thrown up by the falling raindrops spray my face and hands.

But ... and it was such a terrible sight that even now, two decades later, the memory still constricts my throat ... but in the middle of this cloudburst the unfortunate man stayed perfectly still on his bench, never moving. Water was gurgling and dripping from all the eaves; you could hear the rumble of carriages from the city; people with their coat collars turned up hurried past to right and to left; all living creatures ducked in alarm, fled, ran, sought shelter; man and beast felt universal fear of the torrential element, but that black heap of humanity on the bench did not stir or move. I told you before

that he had the magical gift of graphically expressing everything he felt in movement and gesture. But nothing, nothing on earth could convey despair, total self-surrender, death in the midst of life to such shattering effect as his immobility, the way he sat there in the falling rain, not moving, feeling nothing, too tired to rise and walk the few steps to the shelter of the projecting roof, utterly indifferent to his own existence. No sculptor, no poet, not Michelangelo or Dante has ever brought that sense of ultimate despair, of ultimate human misery so feelingly to my mind as the sight of that living figure letting the watery element drench him, too weary and uncaring to make a single move to protect himself.

That made me act; I couldn't help it. Pulling myself together, I ran the gauntlet of the lashing rain and shook the dripping bundle of humanity to make him get up from the bench. 'Come along!' I seized his arm. Something stared up at me, with difficulty. Something in him seemed to be slowly preparing to move, but he did not understand. 'Come along!' Once again, almost angry now, I tugged at his wet sleeve. Then he slowly stood up, devoid of will and swaying. 'What do you want?' he asked, and I could not reply, for I myself had no idea where to take him ... just away from the cold downpour where he had been sitting so senselessly ... in the grip of suicide ... in the grip of deep despair. I did not let go of his arm but dragged the man on, since he had no will of his own, to the sales kiosk where the narrow, projecting roof at least partly sheltered him from the raging attack of the stormy rain as the wind tossed it wildly back and forth. That was all I wanted, I had nothing else in mind, just to get him somewhere dry, under a roof. As yet I had thought no further.

So we stood side by side on that narrow strip of dry ground, the wall of the kiosk behind us and above us only the roof, which was not large enough, for the insatiable rain insidiously came in under it as sudden gusts of wind flung wet, chilly showers over our clothes and into our faces. The situation became intolerable. I could hardly stand there any longer beside this dripping wet stranger. On the other hand, having dragged him over here I couldn't just leave him and walk away without a word. Something had to be done, and gradually I forced myself to think clearly. It would be best, I thought, to send him home in a cab and then go home myself; he would be able to look after himself tomorrow. So as he stood beside me gazing fixedly out at the turbulent night I asked, 'Where do you live?'

'I'm not staying anywhere... I only arrived from Nice this morning... we can't go to my place.' I did not immediately understand this last remark. Only later did I realize that the man took me for... for a *demi-mondaine*, one of the many women who haunt the casino by night, hoping to extract a little money from lucky gamblers or drunks. After all, what else was he to think, for only now that I tell you about it do I feel all the improbability, indeed the fantastic nature of my situation, what else was he to think of me? The way I had pulled him off the bench and dragged him away as if it were perfectly natural was certainly not the conduct of a lady. But this idea did not occur to me at once. Only later, only too late did his terrible misapprehension dawn upon me, or I would never have said what I did next, in words that were bound to reinforce his impression. 'Then we'll just take a room in a hotel. You can't stay here. You must get under cover somewhere.'

Now I understood his painful misunderstanding, for he did not turn towards me but merely rejected the idea with a certain contempt in his voice: 'I don't need a room; I don't need anything now. Don't bother, you won't get anything out of me. You've picked the wrong man. I have no money.'

This too was said in a dreadful tone, with shattering indifference, and the way he stood there dripping wet and leaning against the wall, slack and exhausted to the bone, shook me so much that I had no time to waste on taking petty offence. I merely sensed, as I had from the first moment when I saw him stagger from the gaming hall, as I had felt all through this improbable hour, that here was a human being, a young, living, breathing human being on the very brink of death, and I must save him. I came closer.

'Never mind money, come along! You can't stay here. I'll get you under cover. Don't worry about anything, just come with me.'

He turned his head and I felt, while the rain drummed round us with a hollow sound and the eaves cast water down to splash at our feet, that for the first time he was trying to make out my face in the dark. His body seemed to be slowly shaking off its lethargy too.

'As you like,' he said, giving in. 'It's all one to me... after all, why not? Let's go.' I put up my umbrella, he moved to my side and took my arm. I felt this sudden intimacy uncomfortable; indeed, it horrified me. I was alarmed to the depths of my heart. But I did not feel bold enough to ask him to refrain, for if I rejected him now he would fall into the bottomless abyss, and everything I had tried to do so far would be in vain. We walked the few

steps back to the casino, and only now did it strike me that I had no idea what to do with him. I had better take him to a hotel, I thought quickly, and give him money to spend the night there and go home in the morning. I was not thinking beyond that. And as the carriages were now rapidly drawing up outside the casino I hailed a cab and we got in. When the driver asked where to, I couldn't think what to say at first. But realizing that the drenched, dripping man beside me would not be welcome in any of the best hotels. On the other hand, genuinely inexperienced as I was, with nothing else in mind, I just told the cabby, 'Some simple hotel, anywhere!'

The driver, indifferent, and wet with rain himself, drove his horses on. The stranger beside me said not a word, the wheels rattled, the rain splashed heavily against the windows, and I felt as if I were travelling with a corpse in that dark, lightless rectangular space, in a vehicle like a coffin. I tried to think of something to say to relieve the strange, silent horror of our presence there together, but I could think of nothing. After a few minutes the cab stopped. I got out first and paid the driver, who shut the door after us as if drunk with sleep. We were at the door of a small hotel that was unknown to me, with a glass porch above us providing a tiny area of shelter from the rain, which was still lashing the impenetrable night around us with ghastly monotony.

The stranger, giving way to his inertia, had instinctively leant against the wall, and water was dripping from his wet hat and crumpled garments. He stood there like a drunk who has been fished out of the river, still dazed, and a channel of water trickling down from him formed around the small patch of ground where he stood. But he made not the slightest effort to shake

himself or take off the hat from which raindrops kept running over his forehead and face. He stood there entirely apathetically, and I cannot tell you how his broken demeanor moved me.

But something had to be done. I put my hand into my bag. 'Here are a hundred francs,' I said. 'Take a room and go back to Nice tomorrow.'

He looked up in astonishment.

'I was watching you in the gaming hall,' I continued urgently, noticing his hesitation. 'I know you've lost everything, and I fear you're well on the way to doing something stupid. There's no shame in accepting help ... here, take it!'

But he pushed away my hand with an energy I wouldn't have expected in him. 'You are very good,' he said, 'but don't waste your money. There's no help for me now. Whether I sleep tonight or not makes not the slightest difference. It will all be over tomorrow anyway. There's no help for me.'

'No, you must take it,' I urged. 'You'll see things differently tomorrow. Go upstairs and sleep on it. Everything will look different in daylight.'

But when I tried to press the money on him again he pushed my hand away almost violently. 'Don't,' he repeated dully. 'There's no point in it. Better to do it out of doors than leave blood all over their room here. A hundred or even a thousand francs won't help me. I'd just go to the gaming hall again

tomorrow with the last few francs, and I wouldn't stop until they were all gone. Why begin again? I've had enough.'

You have no idea how that dull tone of voice went to my heart, but think of it: a couple of inches from you stands a young, bright, living, breathing human being, and you know that if you don't do your utmost, then in a few hours time this thinking, speaking, breathing specimen of youth will be a corpse. And now I felt a desire like rage, like fury, to overcome his senseless resistance. I grasped his arm. 'That's enough stupid talk. You go up these steps now and take a room, and I'll come in the morning and take you to the station. You must get away from here, you must go home tomorrow, and I won't rest until I've seen you sitting in the train with a ticket. You can't throw your life away so young just because you've lost a couple of hundred francs, or a couple of thousand. That's cowardice, silly hysteria concocted from anger and bitterness. You'll see that I'm right tomorrow!'

'Tomorrow!' he repeated in a curiously gloomy, ironic tone. 'Tomorrow! If you knew where I'd be tomorrow! I wish I knew myself, I'm mildly curious to find out. No, go home, my dear, don't bother about me and don't waste your money.'

But I wasn't giving up now. It had become like a mania obsessing me. I took his hand by force and pressed the banknote into it. 'You will take this money and go in at once!' And so saying I stepped firmly up to the door and rang the bell. 'There, now I've rung, and the porter will be here in a minute. Go in and lie down. I'll be outside here at nine tomorrow to take you straight to the station. Don't worry about anything, I'll see to what's necessary to get you

home. But now go to bed, have a good sleep, and don't think of anything else!'

At that moment the key turned inside the door and the porter opened it. 'Come on, then!' said my companion suddenly, in a harsh, firm embittered voice, and I felt his fingers span my wrist in an iron grip. I was alarmed... so greatly alarmed, so paralyzed, struck as if by lightning, that all my composure vanished. I wanted to resist, tear myself away, but my will seemed numbed, and I... well, you will understand... I was ashamed to struggle with a stranger in front of the porter, who stood there waiting impatiently. And so, suddenly, I was inside the hotel. I wanted to speak, say something, but my throat would not obey me... and his hand lay heavy and commanding on my arm. I vaguely felt it draw me as if unawares up a flight of steps. A key clicked in a lock. And suddenly I was alone with this stranger in a strange room, in some hotel whose name I do not know to this day."

Mrs. C stopped again, and suddenly rose to her feet. It seemed that her voice would not obey her any more.

She went over to the window and looked out in silence for some minutes, or perhaps she was just resting her forehead on the cold pane; I did not have the courage to look closely, for I found it painful to see the old lady so agitated. So I sat quite still, asking no questions, making no sound, and waited until she came back, stepping firmly, and sat down opposite me.

“Well ... now the most difficult part is told. And I hope you will believe me when I assure you yet again, when I swear by all that is sacred to me, by my honour and my children, that up to that moment no idea of any... any relationship with the stranger had entered my mind, that I really had been suddenly plunged into this situation against my own will, indeed entirely unawares, as if I had fallen through a trapdoor from the level path of my existence. I have promised to be honest with you and with myself, so I repeat again that I embarked on this tragic venture merely through a rather overwrought desire to help, not through any other, any personal feeling, quite without any wishes or forebodings.

You must spare me the tale of what happened in that room that night; I myself have forgotten not a moment of it, and I never will. I spent it wrestling with another human being for his life, and I repeat, it was a battle of life and death. I felt only too clearly, with every fiber of my being, that this stranger, already half-lost, was clutching at his last chance with all the avid passion of a man threatened by death. He clung to me like one who already feels the abyss yawning beneath him. For my part, I summoned everything in me to save him by all the means at my command. A human being may know such an hour perhaps only once in his life, and out of millions, again, perhaps only one will know it ... but for that terrible chance I myself would never have guessed how ardently, desperately, with what boundless greed a man given up for lost will still suck at every red drop of life. Kept safe for twenty years from all the demonic forces of existence, I would never have understood how magnificently, how fantastically Nature can merge hot and cold, life and death, delight and despair together in a few brief moments. And that night was so full of conflict and of talk, of passion

and anger and hatred, with tears of entreaty and intoxication, that it seemed to me to last a thousand years, and we two human beings who fell entwined into its chasm, one of us in frenzy, the other unsuspecting, emerged from that mortal tumult changed, completely transformed, senses and emotions transmuted.

But I don't want to talk about that. I cannot and will not describe it. However, I must just tell you of the extraordinary moment when I woke in the morning from a leaden sleep, from nocturnal depths such as I had never known before. It took me a long time to open my eyes, and the first thing I saw was a strange ceiling over me, and then, looking further an entirely strange, unknown, ugly room. I had no idea how I came to be there. At first I told myself I must still be dreaming, an unusually lucid, transparent dream into which I had passed from my dull, confused slumber. But the sparkling bright sunshine outside the windows was unmistakably genuine, the light of morning, and the sounds of the street echoed from below, the rattle of carriages, the ringing of tram bells, the noise of people. So now I knew that I was awake and not dreaming. I instinctively sat up to get my bearings, and then ... as my glance moved sideways ... then I saw, and I can never describe my alarm to you, I saw a stranger sleeping in the broad bed beside me... a strange, perfectly strange, half-naked, unknown man... oh, I know there's no real way to describe the awful realization; it struck me with such terrible force that I sank back powerless. But not in a kindly faint, not falling unconscious, far from it: with lightning speed, everything became as clear to me as it was inexplicable, and all I wanted was to die of revulsion and shame at suddenly finding myself in an unfamiliar bed in a decidedly shady hotel, with a complete stranger beside me. I still remember how my heart missed a

beat, how I held my breath as if that would extinguish my life and above all my consciousness, which grasped everything yet understood none of it.

I shall never know how long I lay like that, all my limbs icy cold: the dead must lie rigid in their coffins in much the same way. All I know is that I had closed my eyes and was praying to God, to some heavenly power, that this might not be true, might not be real. But my sharpened senses would not let me deceive myself, I could hear people talking in the next room, water running, footsteps shuffling along the corridor outside, and each of these signs mercilessly proved that my senses were terribly alert.

How long this dreadful condition lasted I cannot say: such moments are outside the measured time of ordinary life. But suddenly another fear came over me, swift and terrible: the stranger whose name I did not know might wake up and speak to me. And I knew at once there was only one thing to do: I must get dressed and make my escape before he woke. I must not let him set eyes on me again, I must not speak to him again. I must save myself before it was too late, go away, away, away, back to some kind of life of my own, to my hotel, I must leave this pernicious place, leave this country, never meet him again, never look him in the eye, have no witnesses, no accusers, no one who knew. The idea dispelled my faintness: very cautiously, with the furtive movements of a thief, I inched out of bed (for I was desperate to make no noise) and groped my way over to my clothes. I dressed very carefully, trembling all the time lest he might wake up, and then I had finished, I had done it. Only my hat lay at the foot of the bed on the far side of the room, and then, as I tiptoed over to pick it up. I couldn't help it, at that moment I had to cast another glance at the face of the stranger

who had fallen into my life like a stone dropping off a window sill. I meant it to be just one glance, but it was curious. The strange young man who lay sleeping there really was a stranger to me. At first I did not recognize his face from yesterday. The impassioned, tense, desperately distressed features of the mortally agitated man might have been entirely extinguished. This man's face was not the same, but was an utterly childlike, utterly boyish face that positively radiated purity and cheerfulness. The lips, so grim yesterday as he clenched his teeth on them, were dreaming, had fallen softly apart, half-curving in a smile; the fair hair curled gently over the smooth forehead, the breath passed from his chest over his body at repose like the mild rippling of waves.

Perhaps you may remember that I told you earlier I had never before seen greed and passion expressed with such outrageous extravagance by any human being as by that stranger at the gaming table. And I tell you now that I had never, even in children whose baby slumbers sometimes cast an angelic aura of cheerfulness around them, seen such an expression of brightness, of truly blissful sleep. The uniquely graphic nature of that face showed all its feelings, at present the paradisiacal easing of all internal heaviness, a sense of freedom and salvation. At this surprising sight all my own fear and horror fell from me like a heavy black cloak. I was no longer ashamed, no, I was almost glad. The terrible and incomprehensible thing that had happened suddenly made sense to me; I was happy, I was proud to think that but for my dedicated efforts the beautiful, delicate young man lying here carefree and quiet as a flower would have been found somewhere on a rocky slope, his body shattered and bloody, his face ruined, lifeless, with staring eyes. I had saved him; he was safe. And now I looked ... I cannot put it any

other way ... I looked with maternal feeling at the man I had reborn into life more painfully than I bore my own children. In the middle of that shabby, threadbare room in a distasteful, grubby house of assignation, I was overcome by the kind of emotion. And as ridiculous as you may find it put into words, the kind of emotion one might have in church, a rapturous sense of wonder and sanctification. From the most dreadful moment of a whole life there now grew a second life, amazing and overwhelming, coming in sisterly fashion to meet me.

Had I made too much noise moving about? Had I involuntarily exclaimed out loud? I don't know, but suddenly the sleeping man opened his eyes. I flinched back in alarm. He looked round in surprise, just as I had done before earlier, and now he in his own turn seemed to be emerging with difficulty from great depths of confusion. His gaze wandered intently round the strange, unfamiliar room and then fell on me in amazement. But before he spoke, or could quite pull himself together, I had control of myself. I did not let him say a word, I allowed no questions, no confidences; nothing of yesterday or of last night was to be explained, discussed or mulled over again.

'I have to go now,' I told him quickly. 'You stay here and get dressed. I'll meet you at twelve at the entrance to the casino, and I'll take care of everything else.'

And before he could say a word in reply I fled, to be rid of the sight of the room, and without turning back left the hotel whose name I did not know,

any more than I knew the name of the stranger with whom I had just spent the night.”

Mrs C interrupted her narrative for a moment again, but all the strain and distress had gone from her voice: like a carriage that toils uphill with difficulty but then, having reached the top, rolls swiftly and smoothly down the other side, her account now proceeded more easily:

“Well ... so I made haste to my hotel through the morning light of the streets. The drop in the temperature had driven all the hazy mists from the sky above, just as my own distress had been dispelled. For remember what I told you earlier: I had given up my own life entirely after my husband’s death. My children did not need me, I didn’t care for my own company, and there’s no point in a life lived aimlessly. Now, for the first time, a task had suddenly come my way: I had saved a human being, I had exerted all my powers to snatch him back from destruction. There was only a little left to do, for my task must be completed to the end. So I entered my hotel, ignoring the porter’s surprise when he saw me returning at nine in the morning. No shame and chagrin over last night’s events oppressed me now, I felt my will to live suddenly revive, and an unexpectedly new sense of the point of my existence flowed warmly through my veins. Once in my room I quickly changed my clothes, putting my mourning aside without thinking (as I noticed only later) and choosing a lighter colour instead, went to the bank to withdraw money, and made haste to the station to find out train times. With a determination that surprised me I also made a few other arrangements. Now there was nothing left to do but ensure the departure

from Monte Carlo and ultimate salvation of the man whom fate had cast in my way.

It is true that I needed strength to face him personally. Everything yesterday had taken place in the dark, in a vortex; we had been like two stones thrown out of a torrential stream suddenly striking together; we scarcely knew each other face to face, and I wasn't even sure whether the stranger would recognize me again. Yesterday had been chance, frenzy, a case of two confused people possessed; today I must be more open with him, since I must now confront him in the pitiless light of day with myself, my own face, as a living human being.

But it all turned out much easier than I expected. No sooner had I approached the casino at the appointed hour than a young man jumped up from a bench and made haste towards me. There was something so spontaneous, so childlike, unplanned and happy in his surprise and in each of his eloquent movements; he almost flew to me, the radiance of a joy that was both grateful and deferential in his eyes, which were lowered humbly as soon as they felt my confusion in his presence. Gratitude is so seldom found, and those who are most grateful cannot express it, are silent in their confusion, or ashamed, or sometimes seem ungracious just to conceal their feelings. But in this man, the expression of whose every feeling God, like a mysterious sculptor, had made sensual, beautiful, graphic, his gratitude glowed with radiant passion right through his body. He bent over my hand and remained like that for a moment, the narrow line of his boyish head reverently bowed, respectfully brushing kisses on my fingers; only then did he step back, ask how I was, and look at me most movingly. There was such

courtesy in everything he said that within a few minutes the last of my anxiety had gone. As if reflecting the lightening of my own feelings, the landscape around was shining, the spell on it broken: the sea that had been disturbed and angry yesterday lay so calm and bright that every pebble beneath the gently breaking surf gleamed white, and the casino, that den of iniquity, looked up with Moorish brightness to the damask sky that was now swept clean. The kiosk with the projecting roof beneath which the pouring rain had forced us to shelter yesterday proved to be a flower stall; great bunches of flowers and foliage lay there in motley confusion, in white, red, other bright colours and green, and a young girl in a colorful blouse was offering them for sale.

I invited him to lunch with me in a small restaurant, and there the young stranger told me the story of his tragic venture. It confirmed my first presentiment when I had seen his trembling, nervously shaking hands on the green table. He came from an old aristocratic family in the Austrian part of Poland, was destined for a diplomatic career, had studied in Vienna and passed his first examination with great success a month ago. As a reward, and to celebrate the occasion, his uncle, a high-ranking general-staff officer, had taken him to the Prater in a cab, and they went to the races. His uncle was lucky with his bets and won three times running; then they ate supper in an elegant restaurant on the strength of the fat wad of banknotes that were the uncle's gains. Next day, again to mark his success in the examinations, the budding diplomat received a sum of money from his father which was as much as his usual monthly allowance. Two days earlier this would have seemed to him a large sum, but now, seeing how easily his uncle had won money, it struck him as trifling and left him indifferent. Directly after dinner,

therefore, he went to the races again, laid wild, frenzied bets, and fortune ... or rather misfortune ... would have it that he left the Prater after the last race with three times the sum he had brought there.

Now a mania for gambling infected him; sometimes he went to the races, sometimes to play in coffee houses and clubs, exhausting his time, his studies, his nerves, and above all his money. He was no longer able to think or to sleep peacefully, and he was quite unable to control himself; one night, coming home from a club where he had lost everything, he found a crumpled banknote forgotten in his waistcoat pocket as he was undressing. There was no holding him; he got dressed again and walked the streets until he found a few people playing dominoes in a coffee house, and sat with them until dawn. On one occasion his married sister came to his aid, paying his debts to moneylenders who were very ready to give credit to the heir of a great and noble name. For a while he was lucky at play again. But then matters went inexorably downhill, and the more he lost, the more urgently did unsecured obligations and fixed-term IOUs require him to find relief by winning.

He had long ago pawned his watch and his clothes, and at last a terrible thing happened: he stole two large pearl earrings that she seldom wore from his old aunt's dressing table. He pawned one of the pearls for a large sum, which his gambling quadrupled that evening. But instead of redeeming the pearl he staked all his winnings and lost. At the time when he left Vienna the theft had not yet been discovered, so he pawned the second pearl and on a sudden impulse travelled by train to Monte Carlo to win the fortune he dreamt of at roulette. On arrival he had sold his suitcase, his clothes, his

umbrella; he had nothing left but a revolver with four cartridges, and a small cross set with jewels given him by his godmother, Princess X. He did not want to part with the cross, but it too had been sold for fifty francs that afternoon, just to let him try to satisfy his urge by playing for life or death one last time that evening.

He told me all this with the captivating charm of his original and lively nature. And I listened shaken, gripped and much moved, but not for a moment did it occur to me to feel horror that the man at my table was in sober fact a thief. Yesterday, if someone had so much as suggested to me that I, a woman with a blameless past who expected the company she kept to be strictly and conventionally virtuous, would be sitting here on familiar terms with a perfectly strange young man, not much older than my son, who had stolen a pair of pearl earrings, I would have thought he had taken leave of his senses and such a thing was impossible. But I felt no horror at all as he told his tale, for he spoke so naturally and passionately that it seemed more like the account of a fever or illness than a crime. Moreover, the word 'impossible' had suddenly lost its meaning for a woman who had known such an unexpected, torrential experience as I had the night before. In those ten hours, I had come to know immeasurably more about reality than in my preceding forty respectable years of life.

Yet something else about his confession did alarm me, and that was the feverish glint in his eyes, which made all the nerves of his face twitch feverishly as he talked about his passion for gambling. Even speaking of it aroused him, and his face graphically and with terrible clarity illustrated that tension between pleasure and torment. His hands, those beautiful, nervous,

slender-jointed hands, instinctively began to turn into preying, hunting, fleeing animal creatures again, just as they did at the gaming table.

As he spoke I saw them suddenly trembling, beginning at the wrists, arching and clenching into fists, then opening up to intertwine their fingers once more. And when he confessed to the theft of the pearl earrings they suddenly performed a swift, leaping, quick, thieving movement. I involuntarily jumped. I could see his fingers pouncing on the jewels and swiftly stowing them away in the hollow of his clenched hand. And with nameless horror, I recognized that the very last drop of this man's blood was poisoned by his addiction.

That was the one thing that so shattered and horrified me about his tale, the pitiful enslavement of a young, light-hearted, naturally carefree man to a mad passion. I considered it my prime duty to persuade my unexpected protégé, in friendly fashion, that he must leave Monte Carlo, where the temptation was most dangerous, without delay, he must return to his family this very day, before anyone noticed that the pearl earrings were gone and his future was ruined for ever. I promised him money for his journey and to redeem the jewelry, though only on condition that he left today and swore to me, on his honor, never to touch a card or play any other game of chance again.

I shall never forget the passion of gratitude, humble at first, then gradually more ardent, with which that lost stranger listened to me, how he positively drank in my words as I promised him help, and then he suddenly reached both hands over the table to take mine in a gesture I can never forget, a

gesture of what one might call adoration and sacred promise. There were tears in his bright but slightly confused eyes; his whole body was trembling nervously with happy excitement. I have tried to describe the uniquely expressive quality of his gestures to you several times already, but I cannot depict this one, for it conveyed ecstatic, supernal delight such as a human countenance seldom turns on us, comparable only to that white shade in which, waking from a dream, we think we see the countenance of an angel vanishing.

Why conceal it? I could not withstand that glance. Gratitude is delightful because it is so seldom found, tender feeling does one good, and such exuberance was delightfully new and heart-warming to me, sober, cool woman that I was. And with that crushed, distressed young man, the landscape itself had revived as if by magic after last night's rain. The sea, calm as a millpond, lay shining blue beneath the sky as we came out of the restaurant, and the only white to be seen was the white of seagulls swooping in that other, celestial blue. You know the Riviera landscape. It is always beautiful, but offers its rich colours to the eye in leisurely fashion, flat as a picture postcard, a lethargic sleeping beauty who admits all glances, imperturbable and almost oriental in her ever-opulent willingness.

But sometimes, very occasionally, there are days when this beauty rises up, breaks out, cries out loud, you might say, with gaudy, fanatically sparkling colours, triumphantly flinging her flower-like brightness in your face, glowing, burning with sensuality. And the stormy chaos of the night before had turned to such a lively day, the road was washed white, the sky was turquoise, and everywhere bushes ignited like colorful torches among the

lush, drenched green foliage. The mountains seemed suddenly lighter and closer in the cooler, sunny air, as if they were crowding towards the gleaming, polished little town out of curiosity. Stepping outside, you sensed at every glance the challenging, cheering aspect of Nature spontaneously drawing your heart to her.

‘Let’s hire a carriage and drive along the Corniche,’ I said.

The young man nodded enthusiastically: he seemed to be really seeing and noticing the landscape for the first time since his arrival. All he had seen so far was the dank casino hall with its sultry, sweaty smell, its crowds of ugly visitors with their twisted features, and a rough, grey, clamorous sea outside. But now the sunny beach lay spread out before us like a huge fan, and the eye leapt with pleasure from one distant point to another. We drove along the beautiful road in a slow carriage (this was before the days of the motor car), past many villas and many fine views; a hundred times, seeing every house, every villa in the green shade of the pine trees, one felt a secret wish to live there, quiet and content, away from the world!

Was I ever happier in my life than in that hour? I don’t know. Beside me in the carriage sat the young man who had been a prey to death and disaster yesterday and now, in amazement, stood in the spray of the sparkling white dome of the sun above; years seemed to have dropped away from him. He had become all boy, a handsome, sportive child with a playful yet respectful look in his eyes, and nothing about him delighted me more than his considerate attentiveness. If the carriage was going up a steep climb which the horses found arduous, he jumped nimbly down to push from behind. If I

named a flower or pointed to one by the roadside, he hurried to pluck it. He picked up a little toad that was hopping with difficulty along the road, lured out by last night's rain, and carried it carefully over to the green grass, where it would not be crushed as the carriage went by; and from time to time, in great high spirits, he would say the most delightful and amusing things; I believe he found laughter of that kind a safety valve, and without it he would have had to sing or dance or fool around in some way, so happily inebriated was the expression of his sudden exuberance.

As we were driving slowly through a tiny village high up on the road, he suddenly raised his hat politely. I was surprised and asked who he was greeting, since he was a stranger among strangers here. He flushed slightly at my question and explained, almost apologetically, that we had just passed a church, and at home in Poland, as in all strict Catholic countries, it was usual from childhood on to raise your hat outside any church or other place of worship. I was deeply moved by this exquisite respect for religion, and remembering the cross he had mentioned, I asked if he was a devout believer.

When he modestly confessed, with a touch of embarrassment, that he hoped to be granted God's grace, an idea suddenly came to me. 'Stop!' I told the driver, and quickly climbed out of the carriage. He followed me in surprise, asking, 'Where are we going?' I said only, 'Come with me.' In his company I went back to the church, a small country church built of brick.

The interior looked chalky, grey and empty; the door stood open, so that a yellow beam of light cut sharply through the dark, where blue shadows

surrounded a small altar. Two candles, like veiled eyes, looked out of the warm, incense-scented twilight. We entered; he took off his hat, dipped his hand in the basin of holy water, crossed himself and genuflected. When he was standing again I took his arm. 'Go and find an altar or some image here that is holy to you,' I urged him, 'and swear the oath I will recite to you.' He looked at me in surprise, almost in alarm. But quickly understanding, he went over to a niche, made the sign of the cross and obediently knelt down. 'Say after me,' I said, trembling with excitement myself, 'say after me: I swear...

'I swear,' he repeated, and I continued, 'that I will never play for money again, whatever the game may be, I swear that I will never again expose my life and my honor to the dangers of that passion.'

He repeated the words, trembling: they lingered loud and clear in the empty interior. Then it was quiet for a moment, so quiet that you could hear the faint rustling of the trees outside as the wind blew through their leaves. Suddenly he threw himself down like a penitent and, in tones of ecstasy such as I had never heard before, poured out a flood of rapid, confused words in Polish. I did not understand what he was saying, but it was obviously an ecstatic prayer, a prayer of gratitude and remorse, for in his stormy confession he kept bowing his head humbly down on the prayer desk, repeating the strange sounds ever more passionately, and uttering the same word more and more violently and with extraordinary ardor. I have never heard prayer like that before or since, in any church in the world.

As he prayed his hands clung convulsively to the wooden prayer desk, his whole body shaken by an internal storm that sometimes caught him up and sometimes cast him down again. He saw and felt nothing else: his whole being seemed to exist in another world, in a purgatorial fire of transmutation, or rising to a holier sphere. At last he slowly stood up, made the sign of the cross, and turned with an effort. His knees were trembling, his countenance was pale as the face of a man exhausted. But when he saw me his eyes beamed, a pure, a truly devout smile lit up his ecstatic face; he came closer, bowed low in the Russian manner, took both my hands and touched them reverently with his lips. 'God has sent you to me. I was thanking him.' I did not know what to say, but I could have wished the organ to crash out suddenly above the low pews, for I felt that I had succeeded: I had saved this man for ever.

We emerged from the church into the radiant, flooding light of that May-like day; the world had never before seemed to me more beautiful. Then we drove slowly on in the carriage for another two hours, taking the panoramic road over the hills which offers a new view at every turn. But we spoke no more. After so much emotion, any other words would have seemed an anti-climax. And when by chance my eyes met his, I had to turn them away as if ashamed, so shaken was I by the sight of my own miracle. We returned to Monte Carlo at about five in the afternoon. I had an appointment with relatives which I could not cancel at this late date. And in fact I secretly wished for a pause in which to recover from feelings that had been too violently aroused. For this was too much happiness. I felt that I must rest from my overheated, ecstatic condition. I had never known anything like it in my life before. So I asked my protégé to come into my hotel with me for a

moment, and there in my room I gave him the money for his journey and to redeem the jewelry. We agreed that while I kept my appointment he would go and buy his ticket, and then we would meet at seven in the entrance hall of the station, half-an-hour before the departure of the train taking him home by way of Genoa.

When I was about to give him the five banknotes his lips turned curiously pale. ‘No... no money... I beg you, not money!’ he uttered through his teeth, while his agitated fingers quivered nervously. ‘No money... not money... I can’t stand the sight of it!’ he repeated, as if physically overcome by nausea or fear. But I soothed him, saying it was only a loan, and if he felt troubled by it then he could give me a receipt. ‘Yes, yes... a receipt,’ he murmured, looking away, cramming the crumpled notes into his pocket without looking at them, like something sticky that soiled his fingers, and he scribbled a couple of words on a piece of paper in swift, flying characters.

When he looked up damp sweat was standing out on his brow; something within seemed to be choking him, and no sooner had he given me the note than an impulse seemed to pass through him and suddenly ... I was so startled that I instinctively flinched back ... suddenly he fell on his knees and kissed the hem of my dress. It was an indescribable gesture; its overwhelming violence made me tremble all over. A strange shuddering came over me; I was confused, and could only stammer, ‘Thank you for showing your gratitude ... but do please go now! We’ll say goodbye at seven in the station hall.’

He looked at me with a gleam of emotion moistening his eye; for a moment I thought he was going to say something, for a moment it seemed as if he were coming towards me. But then he suddenly bowed deeply again, very deeply, and left the room.”

Once again Mrs C interrupted her story. She had risen and gone to the window to look out, and she stood there motionless for a long time. Watching the silhouette of her back, I saw it shiver slightly, and she swayed. All at once she turned back to me with determination, and her hands, until now calm and at rest, suddenly made a violent, tearing movement as if to rip something apart. Then she looked at me with a hard, almost defiant glance, and abruptly began again.

“I promised to be completely honest with you, and now I see how necessary that promise was. For only now that, for the first time, I make myself describe the whole course of those hours exactly as they happened, seeking words for what was a very complicated, confused feeling, only now do I clearly understand much that I did not know at the time, or perhaps would not acknowledge. So I will be firm and will not spare myself, and I will tell you the truth too: then, at the moment when the young man left the room and I remained there alone, I felt ... it was a dazed sensation, like swooning ... I felt a hard blow strike my heart. Something had hurt me mortally, but I did not know, or refused to know, what, after all, it was in my protégé’s touchingly respectful conduct that wounded me so painfully.

But now that I force myself to bring up all the past unsparingly, in proper order, as if it were strange to me, and your presence as a witness allows no

pretence, no craven concealment of a feeling which shames me, I clearly see that what hurt so much at the time was disappointment... my disappointment that... that the young man had gone away so obediently... that he did not try to detain me, to stay with me. It was because he humbly and respectfully fell in with my first attempt to persuade him to leave, instead... instead of trying to take me in his arms. It was because he merely revered me as a saint who had appeared to him along his way and did not... did not feel for me as a woman.

That was the disappointment I felt, a disappointment I did not admit to myself either then or later, but a woman's feelings know everything without words, without conscious awareness. For, and now I will deceive myself no longer, for if he had embraced me then, if he had asked me then, I would have gone to the ends of the earth with him, I would have dishonored my name and the name of my children. I would have eloped with him, caring nothing for what people would say or the dictates of my own reason, just as Madame Henriette ran off with the young Frenchman whom she hadn't even met the day before. I wouldn't have asked where we were going, or how long it would last. I wouldn't have turned to look back at my previous life. I would have sacrificed my money, my name, my fortune and my honor to him, I would have begged in the street for him, there is probably no base conduct in the world to which he could not have brought me. I would have thrown away all that we call modesty and reason if he had only spoken one word, taken one step towards me, if he had tried to touch me ... so lost in him was I at that moment.

But, as I told you, the young man, in his strangely dazed condition, did not spare another glance for me and the woman in me and I knew how much, how fervently I longed for him only when I was alone again, when the passion that had just been lighting up his radiant, his positively seraphic face was cast darkly back on me and now lingered in the void of an abandoned breast. With difficulty, I pulled myself together. My appointment was a doubly unwelcome burden. I felt as if a heavy iron helmet were weighing down on my brow and I was swaying under its weight; my thoughts were as disjointed as my footsteps as I at last went over to the other hotel to see my relatives. I sat there in a daze, amidst lively chatter, and was startled whenever I happened to look up and see their unmoved faces, which seemed to me frozen like masks by comparison with that face of his, enlivened as if by the play of light and shade as clouds cross the sky. I found the cheerful company as dreadfully inert as if I were among the dead, and while I put sugar in my cup and joined absently in the conversation, that one face kept coming before my mind's eye, as if summoned up by the surging of the blood. It had become a fervent joy to me to watch that face, and ... terrible thought! ... in an hour or so I would have seen it for the last time. I must involuntarily have sighed or groaned gently, for my husband's cousin leant over to me: what was the matter, she asked, didn't I feel well? I looked so pale and sad. This unexpected question gave me a quick, easy excuse; I said I did indeed have a migraine, and perhaps she would allow me to slip away.

Thus restored to my own company, I hurried straight to my hotel. No sooner was I alone there than the sense of emptiness and abandonment came over me again, feverishly combined with a longing for the young man I was to leave today for ever. I paced up and down the room, opened shutters for no

good reason, changed my dress and my ribbon, suddenly found myself in front of the looking glass again, wondering whether, thus adorned, I might not be able to attract him after all. And I abruptly understood myself: I would do anything not to lose him! Within the space of a violent moment, my wish turned to determination. I ran down to the porter and told him I was leaving today by the night train. Now I had to hurry: I rang for the maid to help me pack ... time was pressing ... and as we stowed dresses and small items into my suitcases I dreamt of the coming surprise: I would accompany him to the train, and then, at the very last moment, when he was giving me his hand in farewell, I would suddenly get into the carriage with my astonished companion, I would spend that night with him, and the next night ... as long as he wanted me. A kind of enchanted, wild frenzy whirled through my blood, sometimes, to the maid's surprise, I unexpectedly laughed aloud as I flung clothes into the suitcases.

My senses, I felt from time to time, were all in disorder. And when the man came to take the cases down I stared at him strangely at first: it was too difficult to think of ordinary matters while I was in the grip of such inner excitement. Time was short; it must be nearly seven, leaving me at most twenty minutes before the train left. I consoled myself, my arrival would not be a farewell now, since I had decided to accompany him on his journey as long and as far as he would have me. The hotel manservant carried the cases on ahead while I made haste to the reception desk to settle my bill. The manager was already giving me change, I was about to go on my way, when a hand gently touched my shoulder. I gave a start. It was my cousin; concerned by my apparent illness, she had come to see how I was. Everything went dark before my eyes. I did not want her here; every second

I was detained meant disastrous delay, yet courtesy obliged me at least to fall into conversation with her briefly. 'You must go to bed,' she was urging me. 'I'm sure you have a temperature.' And she could well have been right, for the blood was pounding at my temples, and sometimes I felt the blue haze of approaching faintness come over my eyes. But I fended off her suggestions and took pains to seem grateful, while every word burned me, and I would have liked to thrust her ill-timed concern roughly away. However, she stayed and stayed and stayed with her unwanted solicitude, offered me eau de Cologne, would not be dissuaded from dabbing the cool perfume on my temples herself. Meanwhile I was counting the minutes, thinking both of him and of how to find an excuse to escape the torment of her sympathy. And the more restless I became, the more alarming did my condition seem to her; finally she was trying, almost by force, to make me go to my room and lie down.

Then ... in the middle of her urging ... I suddenly saw the clock in the hotel lobby: it was two minutes before seven-thirty, and the train left at seven thirty-five. Brusquely, abruptly, with the brutal indifference of a desperate woman I simply stuck my hand out to my cousin ... 'Goodbye, I must go!' ... and without a moment's thought for her frozen glance, without looking round, I rushed past the surprised hotel staff and out of the door, into the street and down it to the station. From the agitated gesticulating of the hotel manservant standing waiting there with my luggage I saw, well before I got there, that time must be very short. Frantically I ran to the barrier, but there the conductor turned me back. I had forgotten to buy a ticket. And as I almost forcibly tried to persuade him to let me on the platform all the same, the train began to move. I stared at it, trembling all over, hoping at least to

catch a glimpse of him at the window of one of the carriages, a wave, a greeting. But in the middle of the hurrying throng I could not see his face. The carriages rolled past faster and faster, and after a minute nothing was left before my darkened eyes but black clouds of steam.

I must have stood there as if turned to stone, for God knows how long; the hotel servant had probably spoken to me in vain several times before he ventured to touch my arm. Only then did I start and come to myself. Should he take my luggage back to the hotel, he asked. It took me a few minutes to think; no, that was impossible, after this ridiculous, frantic departure I couldn't go back there, and I never wanted to again; so I told him, impatient to be alone, to take my cases to the left luggage office. Only then, in the middle of the constantly renewed crush of people flowing clamorously into the hall and then ebbing away again, did I try to think, to think clearly, to save myself from my desperate, painful, choking sense of fury, remorse and despair, for ... why not admit it? ... the idea that I had missed our last meeting through my own fault was like a knife turning pitilessly within me, burning and sharp. I could have screamed aloud: that red-hot blade, penetrating ever more mercilessly, hurt so much. Perhaps only those who are strangers to passion know such sudden outbursts of emotion in their few passionate moments, moments of emotion like an avalanche or a hurricane; whole years fall from one's own breast with the fury of powers left unused. Never before or after have I felt anything like the astonishment and raging impotence of that moment when, prepared to take the boldest of steps ... prepared to throw away my whole carefully conserved, collected, controlled life all at once ... I suddenly found myself facing a wall of senselessness against which my passion could only beat its head helplessly.

As for what I did then, how could it be anything but equally senseless? It was foolish, even stupid, and I am almost ashamed to tell you. But I have promised myself and you to keep nothing back. I... well, I went in search of him again. That is to say, I went in search of every moment I had spent with him. I felt irresistibly drawn to everywhere we had been together the day before, the bench in the casino grounds from which I had made him rise, the gaming hall where I had first seen him ... yes, even that den of vice, just to relive the past once more, only once more. And tomorrow I would go along the Corniche in a carriage, retracing our path, so that every word and gesture would revive in my mind again ... so senseless and childish was my state of confusion. But you must take into account the lightning speed with which these events overwhelmed me, I had felt little more than a single numbing blow, but now, woken too abruptly from that tumult of feeling, I wanted to go back over what I had so fleetingly experienced step by step, relishing it in retrospect by virtue of that magical self-deception we call memory. Well, some things we either do or do not understand. Perhaps you need a burning heart to comprehend them fully. So I went first to the gaming hall to seek out the table where he had been sitting, and think of his hands among all the others there. I went in: I remembered that I had first seen him at the left-hand table in the second room. Every one of his movements was still clear before my mind's eye: I could have found his place sleepwalking, with my eyes closed and my hands outstretched. So I went in and crossed the hall. And then... as I looked at the crowd from the doorway... then something strange happened. There, in the very place where I dreamt of him, there sat ... hah, the hallucinations of fever! ... there sat the man himself. He looked exactly as I had seen him in my daydream just now ... exactly as he had

been yesterday, his eyes fixed on the ball, pale as a ghost ... but here *it* unmistakably was.

I was so shocked that I felt as if I must cry out. But I controlled my alarm at this ridiculous vision and closed my eyes. 'You're mad ... dreaming ... feverish,' I told myself. 'It's impossible. You're hallucinating. He left half-an-hour ago.' Only then did I open my eyes again. But terrible to relate, he was still sitting there exactly as he had been sitting just now, in the flesh and unmistakable. I would have known those hands among millions... no, I wasn't dreaming, he was real. He had not left as he had promised he would, the madman was sitting there, he had taken the money I gave him for his journey and brought it here, to the green table, gambling it on his passion, oblivious of all else, while I was desperately eating my heart out for him.

I abruptly moved forwards: fury blurred my vision, a frenzied, red-eyed, raging desire to take the perjurer who had so shamefully abused my confidence, my feelings, my devotion by the throat. But I controlled myself. With a deliberately slow step (and how much strength that cost me!) I went up to the table to sit directly opposite him. A gentleman courteously made way for me. Two meters of green cloth stood between us, and as if looking down from a balcony at a play on stage I could watch his face, the same face that I had seen two hours ago radiant with gratitude, illuminated by the aura of divine grace, and now entirely absorbed in the infernal fires of his passion again. The hands, those same hands that I had seen clinging to the wood of the prayer desk as he swore a most sacred oath, were now clutching at the money again like the claws of lustful vampires. For he had been winning, he must have won a very great deal: in front of him shone a jumbled pile of

jettons and louis d'ors and banknotes, a disordered medley in which his quivering, nervous fingers were stretching and bathing with delight. I saw them pick up separate notes, stroke and fold them, I saw them turn and caress coins, then suddenly and abruptly catch up a fistful and put them down on one of the spaces. And immediately that spasmodic tic around his nostrils began again, the call of the croupier tore his greedily blazing eyes away from the money to the spinning ball, he seemed to be flowing out of himself, as it were, while his elbows might have been nailed to the green table. His total addiction was revealed as even more dreadful, more terrible than the evening before, for every move he made murdered that other image within me, the image shining as if on a golden ground that I had credulously swallowed.

So we sat there two meters away from each other; I was staring at him, but he was unaware of me. He was not looking at me or anyone else, his glance merely moved to the money, flickering unsteadily with the ball as it rolled back to rest: all his senses were contained, chasing back and forth, in that one racing green circle. To this obsessive gambler the whole world, the whole human race had shrunk to a rectangular patch of cloth. And I knew that I could stand here for hours and hours, and he would not have the faintest idea of my presence.

But I could stand it no longer. Coming to a sudden decision, I walked round the table, stepped behind him and firmly grasped his shoulder with my hand. His gaze swung upwards, for a second he stared strangely at me, glassy-eyed, like a drunk being laboriously shaken awake, eyes still vague and drowsy, clouded by inner fumes. Then he seemed to recognize me, his

mouth opened, quivering, he looked happily up at me and stammered quietly, in a confused tone of mysterious confidentiality, 'It's going well... I knew it would as soon as I came in and saw that he was here...' I did not understand what he meant. All I saw was that this madman was intoxicated by the game and had forgotten everything else, his promise, his appointment at the station, me and the whole world besides. But even when he was in this obsessive mood I found his ecstasy so captivating that instinctively I went along with him and asked, taken aback, who was here?

'Over there, the one-armed old Russian general,' he whispered, pressing close to me so that no one else would overhear the magic secret. 'Over there, with the white sideboards and the servant behind him. He always wins, I was watching him yesterday, he must have a system, and I always pick the same number... He was winning yesterday too, but I made the mistake of playing on when he had left... that was my error... he must have won twenty thousand francs yesterday, he's winning every time now too, and I just keep following his lead. Now ... '

He broke off in mid-sentence, for the hoarse-voiced croupier was calling his '*Faites votre jeu!*' and his glance was already moving away, looking greedily at the place where the white-whiskered Russian sat, nonchalant and grave, thoughtfully putting first one gold coin and then, hesitantly, another on the fourth space. Immediately the fevered hands before me dug into the pile of money and put down a handful of coins on the same place. And when, after a minute, the croupier cried '*Zéro!*' and his rake swept the whole table bare with a single movement, he stared at the money streaming away as if at some marvel. But do you think he turned to me? No he had forgotten

all about me; I had dropped out of his life, I was lost and gone from it, his whole being was intent only on the Russian general who, with complete indifference, was hefting two more gold coins in his hand, not yet sure what number to put them on. I cannot describe my bitterness and despair. But think of my feelings: to be no more than a fly brushed carelessly aside by a man to whom one has offered one's whole life. Once again that surge of fury came over me. I seized his arm with all my strength. He started.

‘You will get up at once!’ I whispered to him in a soft but commanding tone. ‘Remember what you swore in church today, you miserable perjurer.’

He stared at me, perplexed and pale. His eyes suddenly took on the expression of a beaten dog, his lips quivered. All at once he seemed to be remembering the past, and a horror of himself appeared to come over him.

‘Yes, yes...’ he stammered. ‘Oh, my God, my God... yes, I’m coming, oh, forgive me...’

And his hand was already sweeping the money together, fast at first, gathering it all up with a vehement gesture, but then gradually slowing down, as if coming up against some opposing force. His eyes had fallen once more on the Russian general, who had just made his bet.

‘Just a moment,’ he said, quickly throwing five gold coins on the same square. ‘Just this one more time... I promise you I’ll come then. Just this one more game... just...’

And again his voice fell silent. The ball had begun to roll and was carrying him away with it. Once again the addict had slipped away from me, from himself, flung round with the tiny ball circling in the smooth hollow of the wheel where it leapt and sprang. Once again the croupier called out the number, once again the rake carried his five coins away from him; he had lost. But he did not turn round. He had forgotten me, just like his oath in the church and the promise he had given me a minute ago. His greedy hand was moving spasmodically towards the dwindling pile of money again, and his intoxicated gaze moved only to the magnet of his will, the man opposite who brought good luck.

My patience was at an end. I shook him again, hard this time. ‘Get up at once! Immediately! You said one more game...’

But then something unexpected happened. He suddenly swung round, but the face looking at me was no longer that of a humbled and confused man, it was the face of a man in a frenzy, all anger, with burning eyes and furiously trembling lips. ‘Leave me alone!’ he spat. ‘Go away! You bring me bad luck. Whenever you’re here I lose. You brought bad luck yesterday and you’re bringing bad luck now. Go away!’ I momentarily froze, but now my own anger was whipped up beyond restraint by his folly.

‘I am bringing you bad luck?’ I snapped at him. ‘You liar, you thief ... you promised me...’ But I got no further, for the maniac leapt up from his seat and, indifferent to the turmoil around him, thrust me away.

‘Leave me alone,’ he cried, losing all control. ‘I’m not under your control... here, take your money.’ And he threw me a few hundred-franc notes. ‘Now leave me alone!’

He had been shouting out loud like a madman, ignoring the hundred or so people around us. They were all staring, whispering, pointing, laughing. Other curious onlookers even crowded in from the hall next door. I felt as if my clothes were being torn from my body, leaving me naked before all these prying eyes. ‘*Silence, madame, s’il vous plaît,*’ said the croupier in commanding tones, tapping his rake on the table. He meant me, the wretched creature meant me. Humiliated, overcome by shame, I stood there before the hissing, whispering curious folk like a prostitute whose customer has just thrown money at her. Two hundred, three hundred shameless eyes were turned on my face, and then ... then, as I turned my gaze evasively aside, overwhelmed by this filthy deluge of humiliation and shame, my own eyes met two others, piercing and astonished. It was my cousin looking at me appalled, her mouth open, one hand raised as if in horror.

That struck home; before she could stir or recover from her surprise I stormed out of the hall. I got as far as the bench outside, the same bench on which the gambling addict had collapsed yesterday. I dropped to the hard, pitiless wood, as powerless, exhausted and shattered as he had been. All that is twenty-four years ago, yet when I remember the moment when I stood there before a thousand strangers, lashed by their scorn, the blood freezes in my veins. And once again I feel, in horror, how weak, poor and flabby a substance whatever we call by the names of soul, spirit or feeling must be after all, not to mention what we describe as pain, since all this, even to the

utmost degree, is insufficient to destroy the suffering flesh of the tormented body entirely ... for we do survive such hours and our blood continues to pulse, instead of dying and falling like a tree struck by lightning. Only for a sudden moment, for an instant, did this pain tear through my joints so hard that I dropped on the bench breathless and dazed, with a positively voluptuous premonition that I must die. But as I was saying, pain is cowardly, it gives way before the overpowering will to live which seems to cling more strongly to our flesh than all the mortal suffering of the spirit. Even to myself, I cannot explain my feelings after such a shattering blow, but I did rise to my feet, although I did not know what to do. Suddenly it occurred to me that my suitcases were already at the station, and I thought suddenly that I must get away, away from here, away from this accursed, this infernal building. Taking no notice of anyone, I made haste to the station and asked when the next train for Paris left. At ten o'clock, the porter told me, and I immediately retrieved my luggage. Ten o'clock ... so exactly twenty-four hours had passed since that terrible meeting, twenty-four hours so full of changeable, contradictory feelings that my inner world was shattered forever. At first, however, I felt nothing but that one word in the constantly hammering, pounding rhythm: away, away, away! The pulses behind my brow kept driving it into my temples like a wedge: away, away, away! Away from this town, away from myself, home to my own people, to my own old life! I travelled through the night to Paris, changed from one station to another and travelled direct to Boulogne, from Boulogne to Dover, from Dover to London, from London to my son's house ... all in one headlong flight, without stopping to think or consider, forty-eight hours without sleep, without speaking to anyone, without eating, forty-eight hours during which the wheels of all the trains rattled out that one word: away,

away, away! When at last I arrived unexpectedly at my son's country house, everyone was alarmed; there must have been something in my bearing and my eyes that gave me away. My son came to embrace and kiss me, but I shrank away: I could not bear the thought of his touching lips that I felt were disgraced. I avoided all questions, asked only for a bath, because I needed to wash not only the dirt of the journey from my body but all of the passion of that obsessed, unworthy man that seemed to cling to it. Then I dragged myself up to my room and slept a benumbed and stony sleep for twelve or fourteen hours, a sleep such as I have never slept before or since, and after it I know what it must be like to lie dead in a coffin. My family cared for me as for a sick woman, but their affection only hurt me, I was ashamed of their respect, and had to keep preventing myself from suddenly screaming out loud how I had betrayed, forgotten and abandoned them all for the sake of a foolish, crazy passion.

Then, aimless again, I went back to France and a little town where I knew no one, for I was pursued by the delusion that at the very first glance everyone could see my shame and my changed nature from the outside, I felt so betrayed, so soiled to the depths of my soul. Sometimes, when I woke in my bed in the morning, I felt a dreadful fear of opening my eyes. Once again I would be overcome by the memory of that night when I suddenly woke beside a half-naked stranger, and then, as I had before, all I wanted was to die immediately.

But after all, time is strong, and age has the curious power of devaluing all our feelings. You feel death coming closer, its shadow falls black across your path, and things seem less brightly colored, they do not go to the heart

so much, they lose much of their dangerous violence. Gradually I recovered from the shock, and when, many years later, I met a young Pole who was an attaché of the Austrian Embassy at a party, and in answer to my enquiry about that family he told me that one of his cousin's sons had shot himself ten years before in Monte Carlo, I did not even tremble. It hardly hurt anymore; perhaps ... why deny one's egotism? I was even glad of it, for now my last fear of ever meeting him again was gone. I had no witness against me left but my own memory. Since then I have become calmer. Growing old, after all, means that one no longer fears the past.

And now you will understand why I suddenly brought myself to tell you about my own experience. When you defended Madame Henriette and said, so passionately, that twenty-four hours could determine a woman's whole life, I felt that you meant me; I was grateful to you, since for the first time I felt myself, as it were, confirmed in my existence. And then I thought it would be good to unburden myself of it all for once, and perhaps then the spell on me would be broken, the eternal looking back; perhaps I can go to Monte Carlo tomorrow and enter the same hall where I met my fate without feeling hatred for him or myself. Then the stone will roll off my soul, laying its full weight over the past and preventing it from ever rising again. It has done me good to tell you all this. I feel easier in my mind now and almost light at heart... thank you for that."

With these words she had suddenly risen, and I felt that she had reached the end. Rather awkwardly, I sought for something to say. But she must have felt my emotion, and quickly waved it away.

“No, please, don’t speak... I’d rather you didn’t reply or say anything to me. Accept my thanks for listening, and I wish you a good journey.”

She stood opposite me, holding out her hand in farewell. Instinctively I looked at her face, and the countenance of this old woman who stood before me with a kindly yet slightly ashamed expression seemed to me wonderfully touching.

Whether it was the reflection of past passion or mere confusion that suddenly dyed her cheeks with red, the colour rising to her white hair. She stood there just like a girl, in a bridal confusion of memories and ashamed of her own confession.

Involuntarily moved, I very much wanted to say something to express my respect for her, but my throat was too constricted. So I leant down and respectfully kissed the faded hand that trembled slightly like an autumn leaf.

Twenty Four Hours in the Life of Chloe ...

by Annie Gavani





















Creative Death

by Henry Miller

“I don’t want my Fate or Providence to treat me well. I am essentially a fighter.” It was towards the end of his life that Lawrence wrote this, but at the very threshold of his career he was saying: “We have to hate our immediate predecessors to get free of their authority.”

The men to whom he owed everything, the great spirits on whom he fed and nourished himself, whom he had to reject in order to assert his own power, his own vision, were they not like himself men who went to the source? Were they not all animated by that same idea which Lawrence voiced over and over again—that the sun itself will never become stale, nor the earth barren? Were they not, all of them, in their search for God, for that “clue which is missing inside men,” victims of the Holy Ghost?

Who were his predecessors? To whom, time and again before ridiculing and exposing them, did he acknowledge his indebtedness? Jesus certainly, and Nietzsche, and Whitman and Dostoyevsky. All the poets of life, the mystics, who in denouncing civilization contributed most heavily to the lie of civilization.

Lawrence was tremendously influenced by Dostoyevsky. Of all his forerunners, Jesus included, it was Dostoyevsky whom he had most difficulty in shaking off, in surpassing, in “transcending.” Lawrence had

always looked upon the sun as the source of life, and the moon as the symbol of nonbeing. Life and Death—like a mariner he kept before him constantly these two poles. “*He who gets nearer the sun,*” he said, “*is leader, the aristocrat of aristocrats. Or, he who like Dostoyevsky, gets nearer the moon of our non-being.*” With the in-betweens he had no concern. “*But the most powerful being,*” he concludes, “*is that which moves towards the as-yet-unknown blossom!*” He saw man as a seasonal phenomenon, a moon that waxes and wanes, a seed that emerges out of primal darkness to return again therein. Life brief, transitory, eternally fixed between the two poles of being and nonbeing. Without the clue, without the revelation no life, but being sacrificed to existence. Immortality he interpreted as this futile wish for endless existence. To him this living death was the Purgatory in which man ceaselessly struggles.

Strange as it may seem today to say, the aim of life is to live, and to live means to be aware, joyously, drunkenly, serenely, divinely *aware*. In this state of God-like awareness one sings; in this realm the world exists as poem. No why or wherefore, no direction, no goal, no striving, no evolving. Like the enigmatic Chinaman one is rapt by the ever changing spectacle of passing phenomena. This is the sublime, the amoral state of the artist, he who lives only in the moment, the visionary moment of utter, far-seeing lucidity. Such clear, icy sanity that it seems like madness. By the force and power of the artist’s vision the static, synthetic whole which is called the world is destroyed. The artist gives back to us a vital, singing universe, alive in all its parts.

In a way the artist is always acting against the time-destiny movement. He is always a-historical. *He accepts Time absolutely*, as Whitman says, in the sense that any way he rolls (with tail in mouth) is direction; in the sense that any moment, every moment, may be the all; for the artist there is nothing but the present, the eternal here and now, the expanding infinite moment which is flame and song. And when he succeeds in establishing this criterion of passionate experience (which is what Lawrence meant by “*obeying the Holy Ghost*”) then, and only then, is he asserting his humanness. Then only does he live out his pattern as Man. Obedient to every urge—without distinction of morality, ethics, law, custom, etc. He opens himself to *all* influences—everything nourishes him. Everything is gravy to him, including what he does *not* understand—*particularly* what he does *not* understand.

This final reality which the artist comes to recognize in his maturity is that symbolic paradise of the womb, that “[*middle kingdom*]” which the psychologists place somewhere between the conscious and the unconscious, that pre-natal security and immortality and union with nature from which he must wrest his freedom. Each time he is spiritually born he dreams of the impossible, the miraculous, dreams he can break the wheel of life and death, avoid the struggle and the drama, the pain and the suffering of life. His poem is the legend wherein he buries himself, wherein he relates of the mysteries of birth and death—*his* reality, *his* experience. He buries himself in his tomb of poem in order to achieve that immortality which is denied him as a physical being.

[*The Middle Kingdom*] is a projection into the spiritual domain of his biologic condition of non-being. To be is to have mortal shape, mortal

conditions, to struggle, to evolve. Paradise is, like the dream of the Buddhists, a Nirvana where there is no more personality and hence no conflict. It is the expression of man's wish to triumph over reality, over becoming. The artist's dream of the impossible, the miraculous, is simply the resultant of his inability to adapt himself to reality. He creates, therefore, a reality of his own—in the poem—a reality which is suitable to him, a reality in which he can live out his unconscious desires, wishes, dreams. The poem is the dream made flesh, in a two-fold sense: as work of art, and as life, which is a work of art. When man becomes fully conscious of his powers, his role, his destiny, he is an artist and he ceases his struggle with reality. *He becomes a traitor to the human race.* He creates war because he has become permanently out of step with the rest of humanity. He sits on the door-step of his mother's womb with his ... memories and his incestuous longings and he refuses to budge. He lives out his dream of Paradise. He transmutes his real experience of life into spiritual equations. He scorns the ordinary alphabet, which yields at most only a grammar of thought, and adopts the symbol, the metaphor, the ideograph. *He writes [as an enlightened]*. He creates an impossible world out of an incomprehensible language, a lie that enchants and enslaves men. It is not that he is incapable of living. On the contrary, his zest for life is so powerful, so voracious that it forces him to kill himself over and over. He dies many times in order to live innumerable lives. In this way he wreaks his revenge upon life and works his power over men. He creates the legend of himself, the lie wherein he establishes himself as hero and God, the lie wherein he triumphs over life.

Perhaps one of the chief difficulties in wrestling with the personality of a creative individual lies in the powerful obscurity in which, wittingly or

unwittingly, he lodges himself. In the case of a man like Lawrence we are dealing with one who glorified the obscurity, a man who raised to the highest that source and manifestation of all life, the body. All efforts to clarify his doctrine involve a return to, and a renewed wrestling with, the eternal, fundamental problems which confronted him. He is forever bringing one back to the source, to the very heart of the cosmos, through a mystic labyrinth. His work is altogether one of symbol and metaphor. Phoenix, Crown, Rainbow, Plumed Serpent, all these symbols center about the same obsessive idea: *the resolution of two opposites in the form of a mystery*. Despite his progression from one plane of conflict to another, from one problem of life to another, the symbolic character of his work remains constant and unchanged. He is a man of one idea: *that life has a symbolic significance*. Which is to say that life and art are one.

In his choice of the Rainbow, for example, one sees how he attempted to glorify the eternal hope in man, the illusion on which his justification as artist rests. In all his symbols, the Phoenix and the Crown particularly, for they were his earliest and most potent symbols, we observe that he was but giving concrete form to his real nature, his artist being. For the artist in man is the undying symbol of the union between his warring selves. Life has to be given a meaning because of the obvious fact that it has no meaning. Something has to be created, as a healing and goading intervention, between life and death, because the conclusion that life points to is death and to that conclusive fact man instinctively and persistently shuts his eyes. The sense of mystery, which is at the bottom of all art, is the amalgam of all the nameless terrors which the cruel reality of death inspires. Death then has to be defeated—or disguised, or transmogrified. *But in the attempt to defeat*

death man has been inevitably obliged to defeat life, for the two are inextricably related. Life moves on to death, and to deny one is to deny the other. The stern sense of destiny which every creative individual reveals lies in this awareness of the goal, this acceptance of the goal, this moving on towards a fatality, one with the inscrutable forces that animate him and drive him on.

All history is the record of man's signal failure to thwart his destiny—the record, in other words, of the few men of destiny who, through the recognition of their symbolic role, made history. All the lies and evasions by which man has nourished himself—*civilization*, in a word—are the fruits of the creative artist. It is the creative nature of man which has refused to let him lapse back into that unconscious unity with life which characterizes the animal world from which he made his escape. As man traces the stages of his physical evolution in his embryonic life, so, when ejected from the womb, he repeats, in the course of his development from childhood to old age, the spiritual evolution of man. In the person of the *artist* the whole *historical* evolution of man is recapitulated. His work is one grand metaphor, revealing through image and symbol the whole cycle of cultural development through which man has passed from primitive to effete civilized being.

When we trace back the roots of the artist's evolution, we rediscover in his being the various incarnations, or aspects of hero which man has always represented himself to be—king, warrior, saint, magician, priest, etc. The process is a long and devious one. It is all a conquest of fear. The question *why* leads to the question *whither* and then *how*. Escape is the deepest wish.

Escape from death, from the nameless terror. And the way to escape death is to escape life. This the artist has always manifested through his creations. By living into his art he adopts for his world an intermediary realm in which he is all-powerful, a world which he dominates and rules. This intermediary realm of art, this world in which he moves as hero, was made realizable only out of the deepest sense of frustration. It arises paradoxically out of lack of power, out of a sense of inability to thwart fate.

This, then, is the Rainbow—the bridge which the artist throws over the yawning gulf of reality. The radiance of the rainbow, the promise it bespeaks, is the reflection of his belief in eternal life, his belief in perpetual spring, in continuous youth, virility, power. All his failures are but the reflection of his frail human encounters with inexorable reality. The mainspring is the dynamic impact of a will that leads to destruction. Because with each *realistic* failure he falls back with greater intensity on his creative illusions. His whole art is the pathetic and heroic effort to deny his human defeat. He works out, in his art, an unreal triumph—since it is neither a triumph over life nor over death. It is a triumph over an imaginary world which he himself has created. The drama lies entirely in the realm of idea. His war with reality is a reflection of the war within himself.

Just as the individual, when he arrives at maturity, evinces his maturity by the acceptance of responsibility, so the artist, when he recognizes his real nature, *his destined role*, is obliged to accept the responsibility of leadership. He has invested himself with power and authority, and he must act accordingly. He can tolerate nothing but the dictates of his own conscience. Thus, in accepting his destiny, he accepts the responsibility of fathering his

ideas. And just as the problems which each individual encounters are unique for him, and must be lived out, so the ideas which germinate in the artist are unique and must be lived out. He is the sign of Fate itself, the very symbol of destiny. For when, by living out his dream logic, he fulfills himself through the destruction of his own ego, he is incarnating for humanity the drama of individual life which, to be tasted and experienced, must embrace dissolution. In order to accomplish his purpose, however, the artist is obliged to retire, to withdraw from life, utilizing just enough of experience to present the flavor of the *real* struggle. If he chooses to *live* he defeats his own nature. He *must* live vicariously. Thus he is enabled to play the monstrous role of living and dying innumerable times, according to the measure of his capacity for life.

In each new work he re-enacts the spectacle of the sacrifice of the god. Because behind the idea of the sacrifice is the very substantial idea of the sacrament: the person incarnating the great power is killed, in order that his body may be consumed and the magic powers redistributed. The hatred for the god is the underlying motive of the worship of the god: it is based on the primitive desire to obtain the mysterious power of the man-god. In this sense, then, the artist is always crucified—in order to be consumed, in order to be divested of the mystery, in order to be robbed of his power and magic. The need of god is this hunger for a greater life: it is one and the same as the hunger for death.

We may image man forth as a sacred tree of life and death and if, further, we also think of this tree as representing not only the individual man, but a whole people, a whole Culture, we may begin to perceive the intimate

connection between the emergence of the Dionysian type of artist and the notion of the sacred body.

Pursuing the image of man as tree of life and death, we may well conceive how the life instincts, goading man on to ever greater and greater expression through his world of form and symbol, his *ideology*, cause him at last to overlook the purely human, relative, fundamental aspects of his being— his animal nature, his very human body. Man rushes up the trunk of livingness to expand in a spiritual flowering. From an insignificant microcosm, but recently separated from the animal world, he eventually spreads himself over the heavens in the form of the great *anthropos*, the mythical man of the zodiac. The very process of differentiating himself from the animal world to which he still belongs causes him to lose sight more and more of his utter humanness. It is only at the last limits of creativeness, when his form world can assume no further architectural dimensions, that he suddenly begins to realize his “limitations.” It is then that fear assails him. It is then that he tastes death truly— a *foretaste*, as it were.

Now the life instincts are converted into death instincts. That which before had seemed all libido, endless urge to creation, is now seen to contain another principle—the embrace of the death instincts. Only at the full summit of creative expansion does he become truly *humanized*. Now he feels the deep roots of his being, in the earth. Rooted. The supremacy and the glory and the magnificence of the body finally asserts itself in full vigor. Only now does the body assume its *sacred* character, its true role. The trinal division of body, mind and soul becomes a unity, a holy trinity. And with it

the realization that one aspect of our nature cannot be exalted above another, except at the expense of one or the other.

What we call wisdom of life here attains its apogee—when this fundamental, rooted, sacred character of the body is divined. In the topmost branches of the tree of life thought withers. The grand spiritual efflorescence, by virtue of which man had raised himself to god-like proportions so that he lost touch with reality—because he himself *was* reality—this great spiritual flowering of Idea is now converted into an ignorance which expresses itself as the mystery of the Soma. Thought retraverses the religious trunk by which it had been supported and, digging into the very roots of being, rediscovers the enigma, the mystery of the body. Rediscovered the kinship between star, beast, ocean, man, flower, sky. Once again it is perceived that the trunk of the tree, the very column of life itself, is religious faith, the acceptance of one's tree-like nature—not a yearning for some other form of being. It is this acceptance of the laws of one's being which preserves the vital instincts of life, even in death. In the rush upward the “individual” aspect of one's being was the imperative, the only obsession. But at the summit, when the limits have been felt and perceived, there unfolds the grand perspective and one recognizes the similitude of surrounding beings, the inter-relationship of all forms and laws of being—the *organic* relatedness, the wholeness, the oneness of life.

And so the most creative type—the individual artist type—which had shot up highest and with the greatest variety of expression, so much so as to seem “divine,” this creative type of man must now, in order to preserve the very elements of creation in him, convert the doctrine, or the obsession of

individuality, into a common, collective ideology. This is the real meaning of the Master-Exemplar, of the great religious figures who have dominated human life from the beginning. At their furthest peak of blossoming they have but emphasized their common humanity, their innate, rooted, inescapable humanness. Their isolation, in the heavens of thought, is what brings about their death.

When we look at an Olympian figure like Goethe we see a gigantic human tree that declared no “goal” except to unfold its proper being, no goal except to obey the deep organic laws of nature. That is wisdom, the wisdom of a ripe mind at the height of a great Culture. It is what Nietzsche described as the fusion in one being of two divergent streams—the Apollonian dreamer type and the ecstatic Dionysian. In Goethe we have the image of man incarnate, with head in the clouds and feet deeply rooted in the soil of race, culture, history. The past, represented by the historical, cultural soil; and the present, represented by the varying conditions of weather that compose his mental climate, *both the past and the present nourished him*. He was deeply religious without the necessity of worshipping a god. He had made himself a god. In this image of a Man there is no longer any question of conflict. He neither sacrifices himself to art, nor does he sacrifice art to life. Goethe’s work, which was a grand confession—“life’s traces,” he called it—is the poetic expression of his wisdom, and it fell from him like ripe fruit from a tree. No station was too noble for his aspirations, no detail too insignificant for his attention. His life and work assumed grandiose proportions, an architectonic amplitude and majesty, for in both his life and his work there was the same organic foundation. He is the nearest, with the exception of da Vinci, to the god-man ideal of the Greeks. In him soil and climate were at

their most favorable. He had blood, race, culture, time—*everything* with him. *Everything nourished him!*

At this lofty point when Goethe appears, when man and culture are both at peak, the whole of past and future spreads out. The end is now in sight, the road henceforth is downward. After the Olympian Goethe the Dionysian race of artists sets in, the men of the “tragic age” which Nietzsche prophesied and of which he himself was a superb example. The tragic age, when all that which is forever denied us makes itself felt with nostalgic force. Once again the cult of Mystery is revived. Once again man must re-enact the mystery of the god, the god whose fertilizing death is to redeem and to purify man from guilt and sin, to free him from the wheel of birth and becoming. Sin, guilt, neurosis—they are one and the same, the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The tree of life now becomes the tree of death. But it is always the same tree. And it is from this tree of death that life must spring forth again, that life must be reborn. Which, as all the myths of the tree testify, is precisely what happens. “At the moment of the destruction of the world,” says Jung, referring to Ygdrasil, the world-ash, “this tree becomes the guardian mother, the tree of death and life, one ‘pregnant.’ ”

It is at this point in the cultural cycle of history that the “transvaluation of all values” must set in. It is the reversal of the *spiritual* values, of a whole complex of reigning ideological values. The tree of life now knows its death. The Dionysian art of ecstasies now reasserts its claims. The drama intervenes.

The tragic reappears. Through madness and ecstasy the mystery of the god is enacted and the drunken revellers acquire the will to die—to *die creatively*. It is the conversion of that same life instinct which urged the tree of man to fullest expression. *It is to save man from the fear of death, so that he may be able to die!*

To go forward into death! Not backward into the womb. Out of the quick sands, out of the stagnant flux! This is the winter of life, and our drama is to secure a foothold so that life may go forward once again. But this foothold can only be gained on the dead bodies of those who are *willing* to die.

Alexander Grinberg (1885-1979).

Alexander Grinberg (1885-1979) was a Russian Portraiture, Figurative and Pictorial photographer.



He started his Pictorial photography when he was ten years old. In 1895 photography was very much in its infancy. Later, from his twenties onwards his main interest would turn towards Figurative photography.

I first heard about Alexander Grinberg from two Russian expatriate artists here in Vancouver about a decade ago. Both of the artists are sculptors who went to school in Moscow during those few years that spanned the end of the Soviet era and the beginning of the post-Soviet era in Moscow. One of

the artists is female while the other is male. He grew up in Moscow and she in the Far East, winning a state scholarship to art school in far off Moscow.

They both knew details of his life and gave me a different narrative as far as Grinberg's *Figurative* work was concerned. The woman found his work to be lyrical and delightful, while the man described his photography as being obscene and pornographic. The woman spoke in terms of artistic beauty, while he was political.

Grinberg suffered because under Stalinist Cultural policy the *Soviet State* deemed all erotic works as being counter to the public good – the *Soviet Apparatchik* had deemed Grinberg's work as being pornographic.

As the Russian woman explained,

“... far from being revolutionary in its art, Soviet Society was very Victorian when it came to Figuratives. The Soviet's designation of Grinberg's photography as being degenerate meant they sought to destroy both him and his art.”

In 1906 at age 21, Grinberg joined the Russian Photographic Organization (RFO), the foremost experimental photographic union in Russia at the time. This was a pre-Soviet Organization. As a member of the RFO Grinberg, developed his artistic praxis as he explored pictorial photography. He did landscapes, portraiture, theatrical photography as well as Figuratives. He also took up an interest in film-making.

In 1908, at the young age of 23, Grinberg was awarded a silver medal for his pictorial photographs at the All-Russian photography exhibition in Moscow, and a gold medal at the international photo-exhibition for his portraiture submission in Dresden. Some of the pieces shown in Dresden included some of his earliest Figuratives. It was fine to show portraits but it problematic to show Figuratives in Moscow even during the era of the Tsar.

After World War I he worked for the Biofilm studio. Grinberg was interested in Russian experimental and film culture. In the 1920s he became an instructor at the State Technical Institute of Cinematography. It was here that he began his association with Sergei Eisenstein and worked with him on several popular films *Potomok Araba* (1926) and *Dva Druga — Model' i Podrug* (1927).

Being free artists, the RFO was forcibly disbanded by the Stalinist State in 1928 after accusations of “representing an old-world aesthetic that clashed with the rise of proletarian realism and photojournalism and photomontage.”

Bravely Grinsberg continued on his own his exploration of portraiture, publicly stating that “my main focus was scientific work on new methods of photographic portraits.”

His independence brought him to the attention of the *Soviet Apparatchik*. Grinberg was further ostracized by Stalinist policy dictating any eroticism in art as a remnant of bourgeois idleness.

Despite the risk, Grinberg showed one more exhibition of his artwork in 1935, skirting the policy and displaying images of partially dressed women.



His *Figuratives* raised a storm of controversy from the *Soviet Apparatchik*. Within days Grinberg was arrested and sentenced to an indefinite incarceration in a Siberian labor camp.

In a courageous act of brotherly love, his brother risked arrest and incarceration in a Siberian labour camp when he gathered up and hid Alexander's negatives from the authorities, leaving behind some of his lesser works.

Grinberg spent nearly four years in a Siberian forced labor camp cutting down trees and making furniture. He was released on early parole for his artistry and good behavior in 1939.

Upon his return to Moscow he took up an almost bohemian life style and enjoyed where ever possible the city's night life, his artistic reputation opening doors for him, several of his artist models keeping him warm at night

In short order Grinberg resumed his work as a photographer for a variety of institutions. He once again took up Figuratives but did not show them outside his small circle of family and friends.

Beginning in 1941, Alexander Grinberg worked as a photographer and photojournalist, sometimes very near the front on several occasions. Some of his photographs would be published in Soviet newspapers.

After World War Two, Grinberg worked for a modeling agency, photographing for fashion designers. In the late 1950's, and throughout the 1960's he made portraits of various famous Soviet actors and scientists.

Grinberg died in 1979 largely unknown as a photographer within the Soviet Union.

It was only a decade after his death when his Figurative photographs were rediscovered outside the Soviet Union and put on show at some retrospectives in Europe that Grinberg started to become known as a fine Figurative Photographer.

Each few years a new set of Grinberg negatives or prints surface for auction. They have become collectibles.

Alexander Grinberg's photography spans an interesting era of Figurative art. It spans the end of the Victorian era and the beginnings of Art Deco. By it was produced with a Russian sensibility, which is something that makes his work charming and unique. The Grinberg Figuratives in this book spans four decades, 1920 to 1960, and several genres.



“... my main focus was scientific work on new methods of photographic portraits.”

Alexander Grinberg

Figuratives by Grinberg





























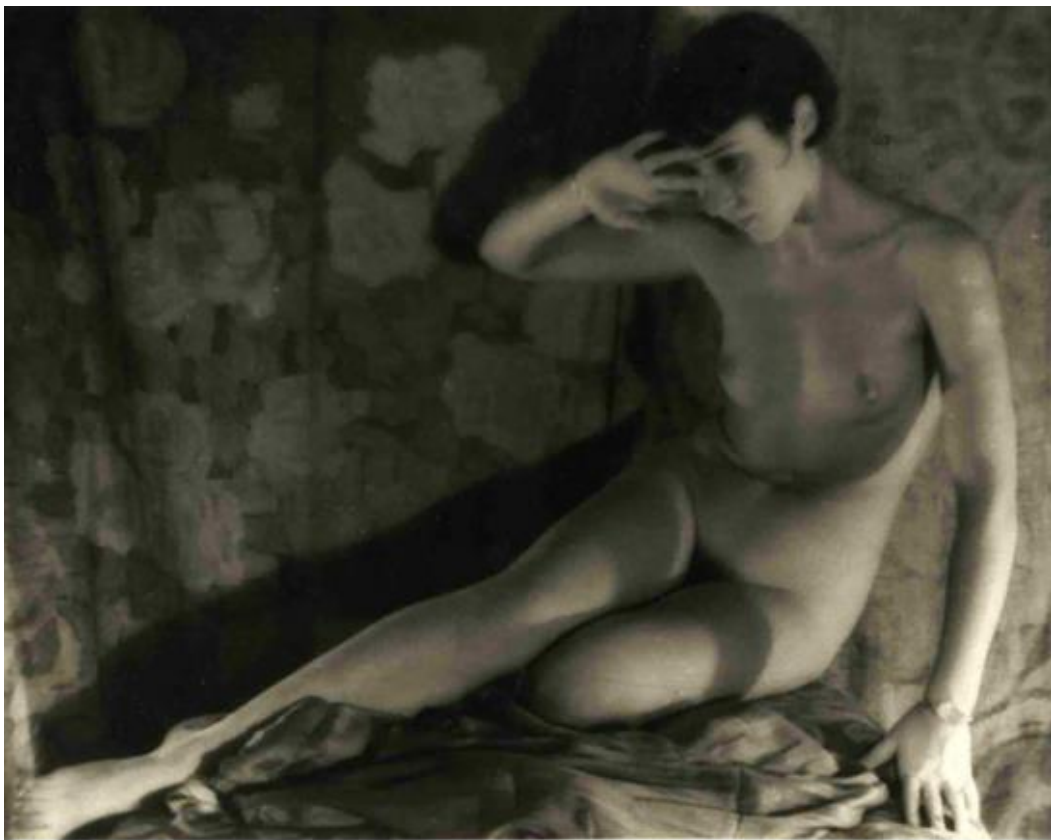






































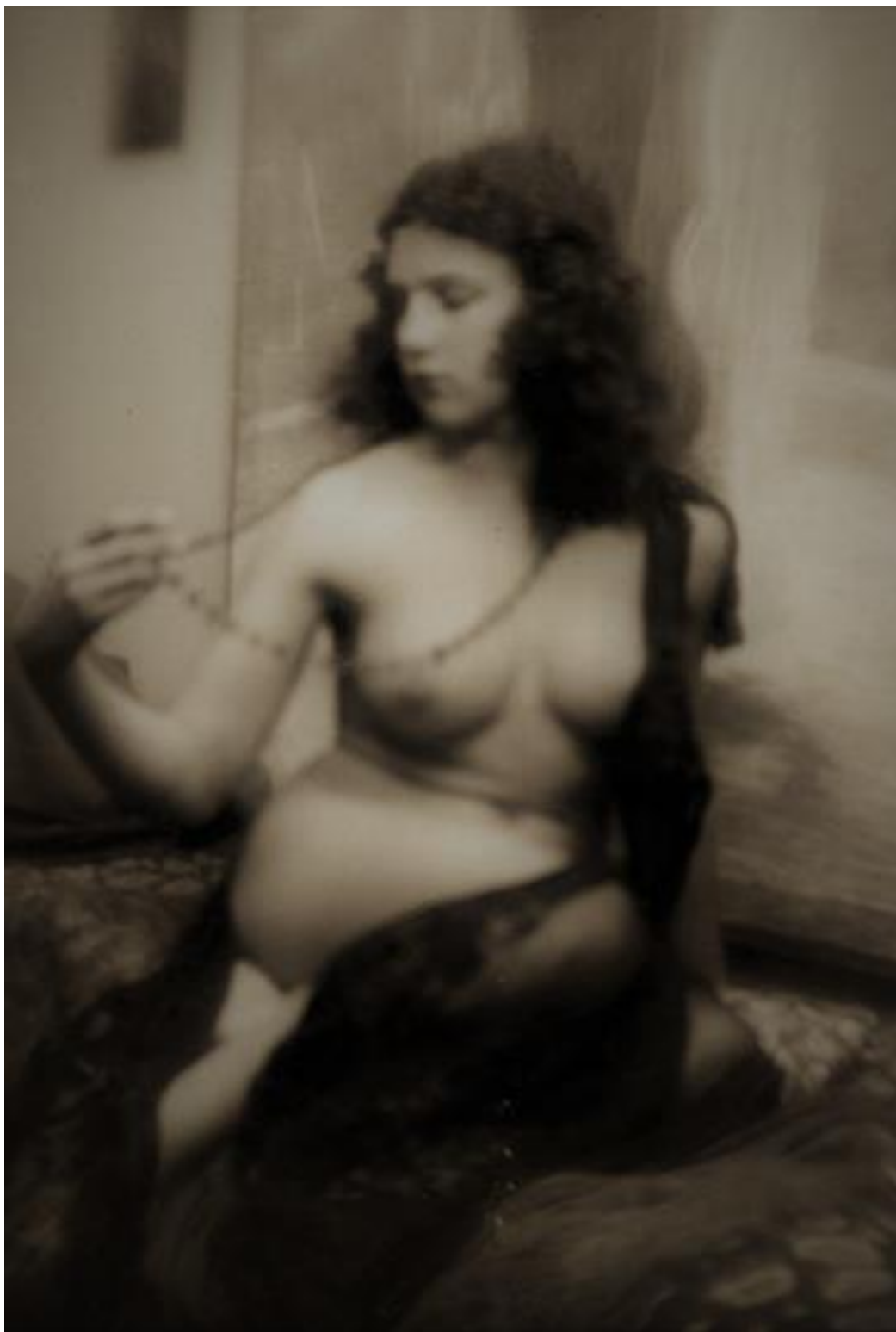


























She's Lost Her Head

by Sarah Haxby



[**Vancouver**] It's only bad guys that would decapitate a helpless damsel – right? No one would ever suspect that John Everett Millais (1829-1896), an artist well known for his association with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and for his hundreds of paintings portraying romantic and allegorical imagery would do such a thing?

And yet Millais literally cut out and removed the original head from the damsel in distress in the oil painting *The Knight Errant* (1870). The damsel in *The Knight Errant* is the only surviving, completed nude by Millais that we know of; it is not known how many other nudes he may have painted over.

The fact that the image does not contain the damsel's original face is not widely known. There was an issue with the original face, but Millais didn't just paint over it, as was the common practice of the time; instead he carefully cut the original head from the painting, sewed in fresh canvas and then meticulously sewed the first face into a different canvas.



The Knight Errant, an image that is still reproduced prolifically today, is an archetypal portrayal of the ideal of chivalry in which a knight rescues a damsel in distress.

The image portrays a knight errant cutting the ropes binding a naked damsel to a large tree. It is twilight, and probably fall or winter as a crescent moon can be seen hanging low in the sky through the leafless branches of the trees. An article of the damsel's clothing lies on the ground. The damsel looks away from the audience and from her rescuer. The knight looks upwards, and appears sympathetically resolute as he performs his noble deed.



A knight errant was a roving knight from medieval chivalric romance literature who typically wandered the land in search of adventures to prove himself and to earn glory for its own sake, rather than for monetary reward. The reason behind the creation of the chivalric knight errant has socio-political history that has washed away over time even as the stereotypical character has endured.

One task popular with these knights was rescuing damsels in distress. The traditional damsel in distress is a classic theme in world literature, art, and film of a maiden – usually a beautiful young woman – placed in a dire predicament by a villain or villains who have either abducted her and taken her to a tower or a cave, or the villains have left her somewhere in a perilous, vulnerable state, usually naked and about to confront a monster as a sacrificial offering, or just abandoned and naked chained or tethered to a rock or tree. The helplessness of the damsel in distress has made the stereotype the target of mockery and feminist criticism. The damsel in distress archetype was created partly to give the knight errant an honourable task to perform, and became popular partially as another way for artists to portray the naked female form without (too much) criticism.

So, what was wrong with the first depiction of Millais' damsel? Why did he have to remove her head and repaint the damsel's face in *The Knight Errant*? According to Millais' son, J.G. Millais, it was "because the work did not sell, the artist later thought the woman would appeal more if turning away from the knight."

It appears John Everett Millais was correct, for after he repainted the damsel the painting sold, and continues to sell and sell and sell.

But who was the original damsel? Was Millais in love with her, or just drawn to her beauty? In the original painting the damsel's face was tilted towards her rescuer, her eyes visible, not looking directly at the audience, but perhaps gazing towards her rescuer. We can understand that Millais changed the composition in order to accomplish the sale of the work, but

why did he love the face of the damsel so much that he cut it out and re-used it in another image, in which he attempted a second nude painting? Millais did not paint nudes, and the woman in *The Knight Errant* is the only known Millais female nude.

The reason for his re-use of the damsel's face is a matter of speculation. Even though Millais kept meticulous notes about his paintings he did not record the name of woman who posed for him. It is known she was real. Millais' records state that live models were used to create the painting. The damsel and the knight in the image were both painted from live models. The background was painted at Wortley Chase:

“Millais originally painted the distressed lady, who had been robbed, stripped, and bound by thieves, as looking at the spectator, and I remember well this position of the head in the picture as it hung in the drawing-room walls at Cromwell Place; but after a while he came to the conclusion that the beautiful creature would look more modest if her head were turned away, so he took the canvas down and repainted it as we see it now.” (J.G. Millais)

The original *The Knight Errant* was described as shocking to the ‘Pharisaic spirit of the Age’ and so no one dared to purchase the image until after its alteration. Millais' son states that a dealer purchased *The Knight Errant* after its alteration and then after that, in 1874, Mr. Tate purchased the painting to give it to the Nation. Thereafter the painting, which was formerly considered un-saleable, “at once gained the favour of the public.”

Even if Millais liked the original face he painted enough to place it in a new canvas, he must have felt that the image of the nude damsel with the strong gaze to the right could not sell in that second painting either. Millais changed her. He repainted her eyes so that they were lowered, and then he added clothes (although there are hints of her naked bosom beneath the sheer fabric in spots, as though he didn't want to completely cover her nudity), and the biggest change was to turn her from being a damsel into that of a martyr.



Millais created a new composition for the young woman with her hands pulled behind her back: the composition now depicted her chained to a rock. She was turned into *The Martyr of the Solway Firth* (c.1870-1872).

There must be some irony to be found in the fact that this poor damsel in distress was taken from her original situation of being rescued from being tied by a rope to a tree to that of being chained to a rock with no hope of rescue; for the story of *The Martyr of Solway Firth* is a story that does not have a happy ending.

Solway Firth is a large and relatively unspoilt estuary situated on the border between England and Scotland on the West coast of Great Britain. As a young Scottish Covenanter, age approximately eighteen years old, Margaret Wilson was executed by drowning for refusing to swear an oath declaring the King of England as head of the church. She was bound to the rocks of the Solway estuary and drowned when the tide rose.

“It is said that as the tide rose she defiantly quoted and sang from Scripture, and witnesses described how her hair floated around her head like a halo in the clear water.” (anonymous)

Margaret Wilson died on May 11, in either 1684 or 1685. She died alongside her friend, Margaret McLaughlan. McLaughlan, the spelling of whose surname is the subject of debate, did not make it into the stories nor the painting, presumably because she was not young, pretty or virginal enough to be considered a damsel in distress by Victorian standards. Margaret McLaughlan was described as “older,” and was not declared a martyr. The two Margarets are thought to be buried in the same churchyard in Wigton. Margaret Wilson became known as *The Martyr of Solway Firth*.

The Martyr of Solway Firth, was the subject of an illustration by Millais for the magazine *Once A Week* in 1862. The subject was one he revisited when he painted *The Martyr of Solway Firth* in 1871, both images created almost two centuries after the historic events occurred.



The painting of *The Martyr of Solway Firth* shows a young woman wearing a lightly patterned, unbuttoned, feminine blouse that is rather translucent in certain areas. We know the painting began as a nude because recently conservators at the Liverpool Museum, which now owns the painting, x-rayed the piece and found that the damsel in distress had originally been the nude originally found in *The Knight Errant*.

I speculate that once again Millais had been stumped by his damsel in distress. He wanted to portray this particular young woman nude, yet found,

once again, he could not; and so he once again altered the damsel in distress to make a sale by adding the clothing and the title to provide an acceptable context to the image as afterthoughts rather than painting the picture as a direct inspiration from the story.

Was the decapitation from the original painting necessary? In order to visualize what the original Knight Errant's damsel in distress might have looked like, I've replaced the original head back into the image.

Where are the villains in *The Martyr of Solway Firth*? It is hard to see the villains that surround the damsel in distress as they're usually left out of the picture frame, literally and metaphorically. The villains in the stories associated with damsels in distress are often not portrayed as the focus is usually on depicting the nude female in her state of vulnerable, sexually available distress. In the strange case of *The Knight Errant*, we are not even sure who the story villains were.

The Knight Errant is unusual from Millais' oeuvre as it is an image that does not direct the viewer to a specific narrative, myth or story that the picture is illustrating. Millais' son describes her as a damsel who had been robbed, stripped, and bound by thieves, but what specific story or poem or song this image derives from has been lost.



It is sometimes hypothesized that the work draws upon the mythology of Andromeda, but as the image lacks any apparent visual tie-in to the story of Andromeda (who was tied to a sea-side rock and rescued by Perseus), I feel that it is erroneous to ascribe the Andromeda story to *The Knight Errant*. As all of Millais' other mythological images draw upon clear sources, I think there likely is a specific story behind *The Knight Errant* that is being depicted, but the narrative connection has been lost to us.

As with many of the depictions of the damsel in distress, the true villain is not in the picture. The finger of blame as to who the greatest villains are can be pointed in many directions including at the mythic monsters, the absent villains who stripped the young women and then tied or chained up the

damsels, the religious zealots and those who chained up the sacrifices, the kidnappers and dragons who carried the damsels away, the artists who painted the images, the patrons who purchase the images and perpetuated the market for more damsel imagery to be produced, and of course, the audiences who have eagerly flocked, for centuries and who, even in modern times, continue to look time and time again upon the damsels in distress.

The fascination of the damsel in distress continues to fascinate and enslave our attention. Of course, as in the case of Millais' decapitated damsel, we prefer that she looks the other way, the better for us to view her without her looking back at us. In the viewing of such works I am unapologetic of the guilty pleasure that occurs, even in academic consideration of these works, even if it might make villains out of us all.

He Knew the Pleasures of my Heart

by Annie Gavani

He knew the pleasures of my heart
 I watched him as he undressed,
Taking in the measure of all his parts
 last admiring that of him that made me happiest ...
During the day his was a master's air ...
 his portent of stoicism and stone
But at night here without a care,
 he well knew we were all alone
So I lay back and let myself be loved
 by him, buried within my softness, as if
With every caress and kisses he pushed
 me closer towards myself and into my abyss.
He lapped my loins and my thighs ...
 he ate me up like a ripe sweet pome.
With every one of his kisses, I sighed
 and resigned myself to his hungry lips.
Then I'd tell him to slow and pause ...
 to stop being such an eager boy!
My belly, my breasts, my lips call
 to share the measure of my joy.

Remembering the Best of Her

by Patrick Bruskiewich

In the background the radio was playing Debussy's *Claire de Lune*. It was just the thing he needed to calm him down.

He sat and ate his morning toast, forcing it down with a gulp of tepid, stale coffee. He had run out of strawberry jam and had forgotten to pick up butter when he was last at the grocers. Well, honestly he couldn't afford either jam or butter, and the bread had that very morning been baked by his bighearted neighbor. The smell of fresh bread, now toast, was a welcomed and comforting one for him. The small generousities of his few friends were what were keeping him alive.

The old, lonely Polish lady next door was kind to him, treating him as if he was her only son. She spent much of her day in the kitchen baking for her family and friends. She had two daughters, both in their thirties, both happily married, and a bevy of young grand children. She was a widow. Her husband had died in a coal mine accident back in Poland when her daughters were two and four. But that was a world and life time ago for her. She now lived in her small and simple apartment in Vancouver, never too far from her family and friends. Life was kind to her and she was kind to him in return.

He was proud but not too proud to accept her small generosity. The larger generosity he did have to refuse. At times she was just too lonely, and just too generous. She was old enough to be his mother. For the last few weeks, when he could afford it, he would bring her a bottle of Polish potato vodka and together they would eat and drink the night away: Borscht, pierogi, lump fish caviar on freshly baked bread, smoked white fish, and poppy seed cake with Chickory coffee for desert. What is the expression ... the surest way to a man's heart is through his stomach.

This morning his stomach ached. She had warm grey eyes, and a bosom that was very Slavic. But luckily he did not have far to stagger home after their frivolities, otherwise things would get more complicated than they are. He had grown to like potato vodka, but not as much as she does, naturally. In return, he promised her that one day he would write her life story, as she told it. He drew the line at doing his laundry. He was not too proud. Somehow the whole neighbor thing made him feel like he was living his life in a Bukowski poem.

The old wire mesh electric fan on his desk whirled hither and thither, blowing hot arid air through his hair and across his desk. A sudden glare caught his eye. He looked up and out his window. Cars were passing in the street below. Outside the midday sun was melting the tar patching up the road. He thought enough to remind himself not to walk on the patches, if he was mad enough to venture out into the midday sun.

He turned back to his writing. He thought himself as good as Hemingway or Fitzgerald, but no one published his short stories, and as a result no one was

there to read them: *The Black Mask, Today and Tomorrow, A Secret Love*. ... these were his priceless manuscripts gathering dust on the corner of his desk, lost beneath a growing pile of rejection letters. Why did he bother? Maybe if he was living a bug's life in far off Paris with her, then they would compare him to Henry Miller. But then he would have to be a lecher, as well. He heard his Polish neighbor singing through the wall. Does he have to go half way around the world to live such a life? He turned the volume of the radio up, but not too much.

As he wrote about love he sat back in his chair remembering his French girl friend. He remembered oh so many things about her. She was like a strange liqueur to him. He had never known anyone remotely like her. Sure, he had known and loved other woman, but in her arms he was just a little boy, and she knew it. It was as if he had been a virgin and she, his awakening to life. What is it about *Les Parisiennes*?

They had spent more time in bed together than doing anything else, except perhaps sitting in the bath and sharing poetry. He sat farther back in his old oak chair and stared out into space as he remembered the poetry she had recounted, and had translated for him. The chair creaked ominously under the tension of him.

Her reciting of French poetry had been Baudelaire, always Baudelaire:

*Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse,
J'ai connu sous un dais d'arbres toute empourprés
Et de palmiers d'où pleut sur les yeux la paresse,*

Une dame Creole aux charmes ignorés.

In that perfumed country caressed by the sun,
I have known, under a canopy of purple trees
And palm raining idleness upon the eyes,
A Creole lady of private beauty.

*Son teint est pâle et chaud; la brune enchanteresse
A dans le col des airs noblemen manières;
Grande et svelte en marchant comme une chasseresses,
Son sourire est tranquille et ses yeux assures.*

Her shade is pale and warm; this brown enchantress
Has gracefully mannered airs to herself;
Large and sinuous, walking like a huntress,
Her smile is silent and her eyes secure.

*Si vous allies, Madame, au vrai pays de gloire,
Sur le bords de la Seine ou de la verte Loire,
Belle digne d'orner les antiques manoirs,*

If you should go, Madam, to the true country of glory,
On the banks of the Seine or of the green Loire,
Fair lady fit to decorate ancient mansions,

*Vous feriez, à l'abri des ombreuses retriates,
Germer mille sonnets dans le Coeur des poètes,*

Que vos grandes yeux rendraient plus soumis que vos noirs.

In some shady and secluded refuge, you would awake
A thousand sonnets in the hearts of poets,
Whom your great eyes would make more subject than your darkness.

He missed her oh so much ... some mornings more than others. He had slept alone last night, once again dreaming about her all night long. When he woke up he was nearly bent out of shape. He remembered her beauty, her bounties, and the way she slept next to him, so close, so fragile and so innocent. They had been together for three, and now had been apart for six months.

Outside a car honked his horn, breaking his train of thought. Damn!

He reached for another piece of toast and let the crumbs fall where they may. He looked down at his old white cotton shirt was stained with wear, and heavy with perspiration. He did not bother to brush the crumbs off. The fan would do that on its next pass. The old fan rattled its agreement. If he could afford it he would smoke, what writer doesn't. But his asthma saved him from the price of that vice, and so it was to bad coffee, and solitude that he turned. Besides, the air was so thick with smoke from the forest fires that he didn't need to puff any cigarettes. A million acres had already been turned to ash this fire season, and they anticipated another million had yet to burn. By the taste of the smoke he knew whether it had come from the interior, or had drifted up from Washington State. The cedar smell told him the wind was blowing north.

Debussy was finished and now the news was droning in over the radio.

Far off in Paris another bomb had gone off killing seven British tourists on a tour bus. The youngest, a boy of seven was on his first trip to the continent, had died at the scene.

There were also more dead children in the civil war in Syria. Why they would call such a thing civil boggled his mind.

In Germany a mosque had been burned to the ground. In Stockholm three women had been raped overnight by roving gangs of street people. The Government was calling for a review of its immigration policies.

The banking system in Moscow had had another melt down for the second day in a row because of the *Shadow Gang*, or someone claiming to be them. It was reported that four hundred million rubles had gone missing. Another half million computers were stuck up with ransomware.

Bit Coins were trading at \$ 1,750 apiece and worth more than gold or platinum. Some Russian hacker had been arrested in Greece for laundering \$ 3 billion worth of Bit Coins. Both the Russians and the Americans were fighting for his extradition. Supposedly he had embezzled \$ 11,000 out of a bank account in Russian.

He smiled to himself. If only he had listened to Hairy Pot Head and bought into Bit Coin, when he had a chance.

The fast paced card game in Washington was Trump – no one knew the rules and jokers were wild. Martinets danced in Ottawa. The government had fallen in Victoria, on Vancouver Island, and there was a new Premier in British Columbia.

He leaned back in his chair and reached over with the tips of his outstretched fingers to change the channel on the radio. He was depressed enough and didn't need any more bad news.

He turned back to his writing and took another gulp of his tepid, stale coffee. It was instant coffee – *Nescafe* – all the packets he could snag at the unemployment office when no one was looking. The packets of raw brown sugar that lay on the desk next to the coffee had been pilfered last Monday when his publisher took him for lunch to give him the bad news. No to *Today and Tomorrow*. But if he put more wanton sex into *A Secret Love* there might be a chance yet for that manuscript to get published.

But he was a writer, damn it. Like Hemingway and Fitzgerald, he refused to use words like f@#k and c\$%t in his writing. He was no Henry Miller and so, it was going to be a long, dry summer for him. He was just not cut up to be a bug'r and he wasn't going to write no brain fungus. If his readers could not understand the meanings of words such as *the best of her*, they could go fuddle themselves.

He remembered the last time they had slept together, before she packed her bags to fly home. She had exhausted him. Her student visa had expired, and

she said she was forced to return to Paris. She wasn't all that happy about returning home. He had suspected her year in Vancouver was to escape some unhappiness that perhaps a year abroad could push away. He had wanted to ask her about it, but didn't have the courage and in the end figured they didn't know each other well enough. He was sad to see her go, and was so desperate to keep her that the morning she was to leave he had proposed to her.

But she had laughed at him, right to his face, and said no –“ we are wonderful lovers, but we are not meant to be together forever, to live together – that would destroy our love.” Besides, she said that she missed a good baguette. You couldn't find any good baguettes in Vancouver. The only thing that Vancouver could produce, she said, were stale donuts, and bagels with onions, and poppy seeds ... dégueulasse. He had had to look the word up and were it not for the fact he loved her he would have taken her to task for such disparagement. He remembered her grin as she said this. Coming from Paris, Vancouver felt like the backside of the moon to her. She could be honest with him, brutally honest at times, hiding behind her mysterious and all knowing Parisienne smile.

She had had the same grin on her face as they sat in the bath tub together the night before she left, when she recounted Baudelaire's poem *Le Chat*. As this moment came to mind from the tips of his toes to the tips of his fingers, a terrible surge of longing rushed through him:

*Viens, mon beau chat, sur mon Coeur amoureux;
Retiens les griffes de ta patte,*

*Et laisse-moi plonger dans tes beaux yeux,
Mêlés de métal et d'agate.*

My beautiful cat, come onto my heart full of love,
Hold back the claws of your paw,
And let me plunge into your adorable eyes,
Mixed with metal and agate.

*Lorsque mes doigts caressent a loisir
Ta tête et ton dos elastique,
Et que ma main s'envivre du plaisir,
De palper ton corps électrique.*

When my fingers lazily fondle
Your head and your elastic back,
And my hand gets drunk with the pleasure
Of feeling your electric body,

*Je vois ma femme en esprit. Son regard,
Comme le tien, amiable bête,
Profound et froid, coupe et fend comme un dard.*

I see in spirit my personal lady. Her glance,
Like yours, dear creature,
Deep and cold, slits and splits like a dart.

Et, des pieds jusques a la tête,

*Un air subtil, un dangereux parfum,
Nagent autour de son corps brun.*

And from her feet to her head,
A subtle atmosphere, a dangerous perfume,
Swim around her brown body.

Then the following morning she was gone.

Yes they wrote to each other ... for awhile ... but the letters became less intimate, and they arrived more and more days apart, until eventually they stopped arriving altogether. He had heard from a friend of her friend that she had stumbled upon some lonely and rich Parisian fellow twice her age, had gotten pregnant by him, and they had been quickly married. She couldn't be happy, he thought, but she had always put her comfort before her happiness, and would probably do good by her new life. In the months that she had been with him, she had lived a free and easy life, while he toiled. Maybe that was her nature.

Maybe that is how she seemed to stay young and so innocent, while, at least innocent in the sense of Anais Nin. It was some weeks after she left that he realized how much she actually looked like Nin, when he had stumbled on a picture of her on a book dust cover. Maybe that was what first attracted him to her. They had met at a party of a mutual friend, each coming with someone else, and then leaving together. It had seemed so natural to be together. That very night they entered the gates of paradise together and so

started three months of bliss. Now she was gone. At the time it didn't seem to him that she was taking advantage of him.

This morning he was sadder than usual. Sad because even his publisher thought *The Delta of Venus* and *Anais Nin* were mere cocktails. His publisher couldn't see it – good writing didn't sell – only *Fifty Shades* and garbage like that. “Gratuitous sex and bondage sells, romantic short stories don't. You have to stick it in the reader and twist it,” he had said over his Potato Latka, sour cream and caviar, “otherwise they don't feel it.” And he wasn't talking about a knife. He had nearly choked on his eggs benny as he sat there in disbelief. Was he caught in some Hollywood nightmare? Was it not time for him to find another publisher? It wasn't enough for him to be taken for the occasional free lunch. It wasn't enough to be lectured on what sells and what doesn't. He didn't care about the perversities of the modern consumer. All he wanted was his short stories to be published.

If she was here, she would understand him, and he would be able to survive this misfortunes. Love triumphs all. But he had loved, and had lost her. She was gone for good, sitting on some park bench in some quiet corner of Paris breast feeding a little baby boy that looked very much like his father. He felt so jealous!

And to make matters more disappointing for him, last Friday some patrons of Letters and Arts had come across *Pen and Pencil Magazine* that he and a few of his writer friends had struggled so hard to establish on the net. They hacked, trolled and trashed it because it was good, and they were not. Maybe it was the piece he had written about there not being any modern day

Russian authors worth a good read, and that Tolstoy was stale beyond any hope.

He coughed and looked out the window. The wind had picked up and the smoke was being blown about. Yes, it was going to be a very, very long hot summer.

He had missed putting in his rent check for July by just a day, and had to scramble about to make sure there was enough money in the bank. You borrow until you need to beg. But what will come after the begging? His family and close friends had all but given up on him. Now that she was gone, I guess, even she did. That's why she left him. Didn't he once read that Henry Miller manage to survive a debt of \$ 28,000, before he became a well known writer. Hell, if Henry Miller could manage to carry a debt and pay the rent, so could he. He wasn't an American down and out in Paris, was he?

He had had to hock his laptop and now he was sitting at his desk writing with pen and paper at hand. At least he remembered to double space his manuscripts. And I guess opening an old dictionary from time to time wouldn't do him much harm. He was a writer after all, and writers like all artists were meant to suffer. It is through their suffering that they become great. He smirked. Who was it that had said that great writers only become famous after they are dead, and that parasites can get rich off of them, while the literary critics pick at their dead bones.

Almost on queue Dvorak's Largo from his *New World Symphony* is playing on the radio. Don't give up, he thought!

His latest rejection was typical. The call had *Hope* as a theme and what does he do but write a short submission, *I Hope to be Read and Remembered*:

"Every day I sit to write a few hundred words hoping that I would be read and remembered. I am not married, except perhaps to my writing, and don't have offspring, unless you count *mes oeuvres*. I am of the age where my urge to procreate has long dried out.

I write poetry, prose, as well as some science and math. More people read my science and math than my other manifestations. Maybe it is because I exist in my world of the *Mathematical Bohemian* and not that of the poetic or proselytic. Seen through my eyes, the world has a different meaning. I am more of an Einsteinean than a Kardashian.

Perhaps a hundred years from now, many decades after I am gone, I will be read and remembered, but maybe not for my science and math. Maybe a thousand years hence the curious will discover my poetry and prose and wondered why he died a poor and forgotten man.

Or, maybe in the end my science and math will have made the world a better place. Is there such a thing as mathematical justice?

I can only hope. "

The irony is, of course, that he had submitted the piece on a Monday morning and it was rejected that very afternoon.

If only they were truthful. If only they could enjoy these cold, homespun stories of life that are real, and honest, and not the make believe or *fantagorical*. Perhaps it was the underlying humor of his stories they didn't get.

These were stories about Hairy Pot Head who was always so stoned that he could not keep down a job. Yet, somehow, he always had money. These were stories about his younger sister who foolishly spent the best years of her life, and most of her meager inheritance, either helping Hairy out of his many troubles, or was studying psychology and contemporary writing at UBC. She was now a barista at Starbucks during the day, from 8 to 5, seven days each week and a struggling single mom at night with a four year old with Asperger's, a love child that was the consequence of her falling in with her flaky creative writing instructor, who she thought would give her an A if only she opened herself up to his *creative impulses*. Up until then she had been a good girl. After all her name was Virginia.

He was now the head of the Department of Contemporary Writing at UBC, and married to his second wife. He divorced his first wife when she tried to run Virginia and their six month old baby over as they all three of them were walking across Robson Street one pleasant autumn morning. Why hadn't he marry Virginia, instead of some young floozy?

He wrote on. He knew Virginia, and loved both her and her baby, but was too poor to help her out, and too proud to let her help him out. Yet, when either was lonely they would share an evening together, but not the way you think they would. She would let him wash her back as she read his latest writing. She thought he was really good, as both a man and a writer. But sadly, the bastard had given her more than just a child, but something simplex as well. It tore his heart that he had to go out of his way to keep Virginia's honest life from finding the printer's ink.

Yes, his stories were real, cold and homespun. But was there any room for him under the sun? Maybe, she said, he should move to New York City, and get away from this place. Flee to the other end of the continent. Start anew. That is where the real publishers are. At least there, there are different pretenses.

It's not that Canadians don't have deep convictions, about important things like donuts and hockey, it's just that these fall into that unfathomable, hollowness of the place, a place where ignorance is bliss and well, people are their own follies.

Do they want big men here in Canada? Do they want them cultured? What is cultured? He knew that the only culture they have in Vancouver is at the grocer's, in the imported cheese isle, there among the Limburger, Gorgonzola, Stilton and Brie. It has been years since he enjoyed a good stout and unpasteurized Stilton. How it really works here In Vancouver, the antipode of the cultured world, is that if you say something over and over, like ... *cannabis is good for you* ... then you cultivate brain fungus. Yea to

Hairy Pot Head! As he sat there it finally dawned on him why ol' Pot Head always seemed to have a few dollars in his pocket, and always in increments of thirty dollars ... never less than two forty at the end of the month, but never more than four twenty.

When does the Amtrak leave, Virginia asked him last night? Maybe Portland, in Oregon? Just anywhere but here. Missed today's 150th. He had no reason to celebrate Canada's Birthday. He didn't recognize this country anymore as being his Canada. Here they paid the librarians more than the writers and wondered why there are no good Canadian authors. Maybe there are a few good librarians. And besides he preferred the earnestness of Hemingway, to the mopiness of Munro any day. Hell, he had even started to enjoy *The History of the English Speaking Peoples* by Winston Churchill. After all they had given him a Nobel Prize in Literature for his writing.

He crunched hard on the final bit of toast, a piece of dried out crust. It stuck in his throat and he began to choke. He picked up the nearly empty cup of coffee to wash it down. As he finished the cup some drops of coffee dribbled down his chin and onto his white cotton shirt. This didn't bother him. He had been sitting for too long and he had hit a dry spell in his writing.

He pulled the shirt off over his head. Then he got up to pour himself a cold bath. There was not much else he could do in the middle of a hot day like today, Saturday July 1st.

He would go into town tomorrow July 2nd and poke around a bit. He enjoyed Sundays the most, when the streets of Vancouver were empty and when they still rang church bells to summon the devout to the Catholic Cathedral. Maybe he would even go to church and pray for his deliverance. Miracles sometime happen.

Virginia had taken him to church a few weeks back. When he sat beside her on that hard wooden pew life had seemed almost perfect. People looked at the three of them, mother, child and him as if they belonged together. As he sat next to her and thought about all she had been through, and about all that she would endure he knew he could not leave her to her own solitary efforts. Struggle as they might through life he would not abandon his friend, and her son. Then from the very depths of his remembrances came a few words that he once read in D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* about Anna Victrix: The Church talked about her soul, about the welfare of mankind, as if the saving of her soul lay in her performing certain acts conducive to the welfare of mankind. Well and good – it was so, then.”

That very evening he sat to write something special:

“Why I Write

There are perhaps three main reasons why I write and these reasons are a true, dear and clear reflection of my beliefs. I write to pursue truth, virtue and understanding.

I cannot claim that writing has been in my blood since I was very young, however I can claim that I have become a mature writer by reading the fine works of others and contemplating the truths, virtues and understanding they have shared with the world.

In the pursuit of truth there is that dichotomy that Immanuel Kant expressed, which I paraphrase ... *“two things fill the mind with ever increasing wonder and awe ... the starry heavens above us and the moral laws within us.”*

It is not a pure awe that truth requires of us but instead an impersonal and practical one that is set in our efforts to understand the physical laws that governs to the far corners of the universe in which we reside, as well as the moral laws that govern our actions, we mere baubles in the starry heavens.

Those corners of the universe can be to the very large, the scale of galaxies and the universe itself, or it might be the corners set out in the other direction, that where quarks and leptons reside and quanta is the norm. As we well know, given the advances in modern science, these two limits, the very large and the very small, are directly coupled to one another, borrowing a mathematical concept from particle physics. And we too, organic machines made of organic materials, are delicately coupled in at the middle of the universal scale of distances.

What of the moral laws and how they pertain to virtue? I am Catholic and bring to my life a Catholic sensibility. The world seems a far more sinister place than two decades ago. While the Cold War is deemed over, the world has become even more lawless and many more millions suffer today the inequities of war and oppression than in the past. The United Nations count the suffering numbers at 65 million, numbers greater than at any time since the end of the Second World War, with 100 million more suffering from famine and a lack of clean, potable water.

I write to express my Catholic sensibilities to lend aid to those who suffer and to encourage those who govern to do more to alleviate their suffering.

In the pursuit of understanding I reflect to a large degree the sensibilities of Albert Einstein in that this understanding does not deem us the centre of the universe, but a minuscule part of it, with a clear understanding of our limitations and possibilities. It was he who reminded us that, “*once you stop learning ... you start dying.*” Is it possible that the troubled heart of our civilization has already begun to wither and fade?

Every moment is precious, all of our words and actions meaningful, if we decide to make them so. “

And to his great joy his little bit of truth was accepted to be published and all hope was restored. Virginia had hugged him, and kissed him and cried for him, and told him her prayers had been answered. Miracles do happen!

Then he grabbed the library book he had borrowed last week and turned to the final few pages of Hammett's *The Thin Man*. Maybe he would find out who did it, before he fell asleep in the bath. He also snagged the last of the Pernod and didn't even bother to pour it in a glass. *La Parisienne* would be horrified that he was just going to drink it right out of the bottle. Before he had met her he had no idea what *Pernod* was. He didn't even drink beer. Now look at him!

He left the fan to blow on. On the radio Rodrigo's Adagio from *Concierto de Aranjuez* was just in its beginnings. Hell ... everything about today was reminding him of her. The first time they had made love in the afternoon Rodrigo had been playing on the radio.

No matter, he had to escape this heat and that meant a cold bath.

He saw the tap on the sink was dripping, but he didn't care. Let it drip! He took off the last of his things and left them fall at his feet. Just before he stepped into the bath he looked up at himself in the old French silvered mirror over the sink. If I am made in God's image, he thought, God must have a sense of humor. He stepped into the bath, settled in, and let the cold water find every part of him. The feeling, although somewhat uncomfortable, was a feeling nonetheless.

He opened *The Novels of ...* to page 691. How did Dashiell Hammett make it through life, he thought. He smiled as he read Nora's words to her husband Nick: "*Tell me something, Nick. Tell me the truth: when you were wrestling with Mimi, didn't you have an erection?*"

"Oh a little," Nick responded.

The e-word forced him back to the same place, but at a happier time. He remembered the first time they had shared a bath together. She had whispered her first Baudelaire poem into his ear:

*La Nature est un temple où de vivants pilliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.*

Nature is a temple where living pillars
Let sometime emerge confused words;
Man crosses it through forests of symbols
Which watch him with intimate eyes.

Her breasts had become fuller and her nipples had come alive as she whispered into his ears.

*Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,*

Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Like those deep echoes that meet from afar
In a dark and profound harmony,
As vast as night and clarity,
So perfumes, colours, tones answer each other.

He had looked down at the bright crucifix and gold chain around her neck.
A flush had passed across her body so that it had the red glow of the morning sky.

*Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,*

There are perfumes fresh as children's flesh,
Soft as grass, green as meadows,
And others, corrupted, rich, triumphant,

She had leaned back to kiss him. They had both begun to tremble together.
Goose bumps appeared all over her body. Yes God had created woman after man after learning from her mistakes. And she had won an award for the creation of woman. For an instant, time had stopped ...

*Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,*

Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.

Possessing the diffusion of infinite things,
Like amber, musk, incense and aromatic resin,
Chanting the ecstasies of spirit and senses.

The ecstasies of spirit eh ... He smirked and took a good swig of Pernod, which warmed his insides. There he was, cold on the outside he thought, but warm on the inside. Maybe that is how real life was meant to be.

His wiggled his toes that poked up from the far end of the bath tub. Small waves passed along the surface of the water, refracting the sunlight streaming in from the little window above him. He looked up, out of the window, and could just make out a tiny patch of blue sky. He took the last swig of Pernod. Maybe the smoke was clearing up? He felt light headed.

That little glimpse of blue sky seemed to cheer him up. He now knew how best to finish the short story he was writing. Something about blue sky, and hope ... If I stop writing I can no longer be me.

As he lay back in his cold bath remembering her, he had all but forgotten Nick and Nora. He looked past the book, past the words, at the best of him poking up out of the water and smiled. Was life really about remembering the best of her?

He dashed Hammett down onto the bathroom floor, splashing bath water all about, and watched with some fascination as the dry pages soaked up the

water off the floor. Tonight he will drink too much vodka and tomorrow morning he will go to Church with Virginia and her son.

Well ... real life does do a man good.

Drawing the Human Form

by Eric Gill (London, 1938)

It is commonly taught in choirs and places where they sing of such things that the study of nature and particularly of the human body and its anatomy and learning to draw from the living model are the first necessities in the training of the serious 'art' student. The proper study of mankind is man, and this study is supposed to be chiefly a matter of having a good look. '



Eugene Frank, Man and Woman

First I look and then I draw my look.' This theory of art training has had a run of three or four centuries and we have now reached saturation point. We now at last realize that the child who said, 'First I think and then I draw my think' was not only much righter but was also in line with the theory of all the previous centuries and the practice of the whole human world from the beginning of time, saving only such times and places which, like our own, had retreated from the general notion that human making is primarily a product of human imagination.

The idea, then, that drawing from life is the first thing to be done, is now discarded, and we may now say that if you are going to draw from the naked model at all the best time to do it is rather later in life, when the experience of living has filled the mind and given a deeper, a more sensual as well as a more spiritual meaning to material things.

It is doubtful however whether it is ever desirable to employ professional models and to treat drawing from nature, whether vegetable or animal, as part of school education. What is wrong with your friends and relations? Perhaps they haven't specially perfect figures; but that is not the point; for in any case it is what is in your own head that matters most and not what the model has in his or her own body. The draughtsman is not primarily a photographer; he is primarily that kind of artist who by means of lines makes a sort of house to dwell in. Just as we dwell physically in houses of bricks and stones, so we dwell mentally in constructions of lead and chalk and paint. And you must know what living is before you can build a house.

For drawing, like any other art, is not merely a means to an end. Drawing is worth doing for its own sake; it is subordinate to no other end than the general end of life itself— man's final beatitude. Of course it is right and proper when you have some particular work in hand to make sketches and preliminary models to guide you. If you are carving a figure to fit a certain place, it would be absurd to proceed regardless of dimensions and expect the builders to accommodate their building to your carving. For this reason a preliminary drawing or model is commonly necessary. And, in the same way, if you have to make a figure representing a particular meaning and therefore standing in some particular attitude, it is generally desirable to make preliminary drawings in order to work out the relations of one part to another. For this purpose a living model may sometimes be useful, providing you don't take it too seriously. For you can seldom get a living person to stand exactly as you wish and you would be quite wrong to let the model dictate.

These things being admitted, the main point remains: drawings are ends, not means, and even studies and sketches should be thought of as worth doing for themselves. And this point of view is in line with the general rule that drawing from life properly comes late in life rather than early. For the training of imagination is the first thing to be seen to, and that is best achieved by life and experience; and in order to make this particular thing, this construction of lines derived from the sight of human limbs and bodies, the artist is more dependent upon his life and experience than he is in any other business. We are creatures who know and will and love. What do we know and will and love? Whatever else may be said, we know and desire and love one another in a physical manner. There is no escape from this and

no denying it. Does anyone want to escape or deny? Perhaps the Buddhists want to escape; perhaps the Puritans would deny. But the rest of us accept the fact and are glad.

Drawings of the nude, therefore, have a special place in human affairs and a special veneration, and as human life is not all a matter of tears and sighs, but also, and equally and even more importantly, a matter of laughter, there is naturally a comic side to all this. Don't let 's be too solemn about it. Hair on the belly is certainly very becoming but it is also extremely amusing — quite as amusing as hair on the head. Man is matter and spirit, both real and both good, and the funny is certainly a part of the good. The human body is in fact a good joke — let us take it so.

The only serious and solemn part of drawing from the life is the technique itself. How to draw? That is the serious question. What is drawing? To draw is to drag or pull something along, and in this matter it means dragging or pulling a pencil or brush along the surface of paper. We may agree perhaps that pushing a graver is, by a sort of license, also a kind of drawing — drawing backwards. Smudging about with tones and colours is not drawing, though such things may appropriately be added on occasion. Good drawing, then, means good lines— clean lines, clear lines, firm lines, lines you intend and not mere accidents. That 's all there is to it. But a line is not in practice what Mr. Euclid says it is. It has width as well as length. There are two edges to it, and therefore if a line represents a contour it follows that the said contour is represented by one edge or the other; it cannot be represented by both. The draughtsman must remember this. It is almost the first rule to be taught and the last to be learnt. Do you think of your line as a narrow portion

of the surface of the thing you are drawing, or as a narrow strip of its background? Your pencil cannot be absolutely sharp-pointed. It makes a line with two edges. Which edge is the contour you are drawing?

The Wardrobe

by Thomas Mann (1899)

It was cloudy, cool, and half-dark when the Berlin-Rome express drew in at a middle-sized station on its way. Albrecht van der Qualen, solitary traveller in a first-class compartment with lace covers over the plush upholstery, roused himself and sat up. He felt a flat taste in his mouth, and in his body the none-too-agreeable sensations produced when the train comes to a stop after a long journey and we are aware of the cessation of rhythmic motion and conscious of calls and signals from without. It is like coming to oneself out of drunkenness or lethargy. Our nerves, suddenly deprived of the supporting rhythm, feel bewildered and forlorn. And this the more if we have just roused out of the heavy sleep one falls into in a train.

Albrecht van der Qualen stretched a little, moved to the window, and let down the pane. He looked along the train. Men were busy at the mail van, unloading and loading parcels. The engine gave out a series of sounds, it snorted and rumbled a bit, standing still, but only as a horse stands still, lifting its hoof, twitching its ears, and awaiting impatiently the signal to go on.

A tall, stout woman in a long raincoat, with a face expressive of nothing but worry, was dragging a hundred-pound suitcase along the train, propelling it before her with pushes from one knee. She was saying nothing, but looking heated and distressed. Her upper lip stuck out, with little beads of sweat

upon it – altogether she was a pathetic figure. “You poor dear thing,” van der Qualen thought. “If I could help you, soothe you, take you in – only for the sake of that upper lip. But each for himself, so things are arranged in life; and I stand here at this moment perfectly carefree, looking at you as I might at a beetle that has fallen on its back.”

It was half-dark in the station shed. Dawn or twilight – he did not know. He had slept, who could say whether for two, five, or twelve hours? He had sometimes slept for twenty-four, or even more, unbrokenly, an extraordinarily profound sleep. He wore a half-length dark-brown winter overcoat with a velvet collar. From his features it was hard to judge his age: one might actually hesitate between twenty-five and the end of the thirties. He had a yellowish skin, but his eyes were black like live coals and had deep shadows round them. These eyes boded nothing good. Several doctors, speaking frankly as man to man, had not given him many more months. - His dark hair was smoothly parted on one side.

In Berlin - although Berlin had not been the beginning of his journey – he had climbed into the train just as it was moving off – incidentally with his red leather hand-bag. He had gone to sleep and now at waking felt himself so completely absolved from time that a sense of refreshment streamed through him. He rejoiced in the knowledge that at the end of the thin gold chain he wore round his neck there was only a little medallion in his waistcoat pocket. He did not like to be aware of the hour or of the day of the week, and moreover he had no truck with the calendars. Some time ago he had lost the habit of knowing the day of the month or even the month of the year. Everything must be in the air - so he put it in his mind, and the phrase

was comprehensive though rather vague. He was seldom or never disturbed in this programme, as he took pains to keep all upsetting knowledge at a distance from him. After all, was it not enough for him to know more or less what season it was? "It is more or less autumn," he thought, gazing out into the damp and gloomy train shed. "More I do not know. Do I even know where I am?"

His satisfaction at this thought amounted to a thrill of pleasure. No, he did not know where he was! Was he still in Germany! Beyond a doubt in North Germany? That remained to be seen. While his eyes were still heavy with sleep the window of his compartment had glided past an illuminated sign; it probably had the name of the station on it, but not the picture of a single letter had been transmitted to his brain. In still dazed condition he had heard the conductor call the name two or three times, but not a syllable had he grasped. But out there in a twilight of which he knew not so much as whether it was morning or evening lay a strange place, an unknown town.

Albrecht van der Qualen took his felt hat out of the rack, seized his red leather hand-bag, the strap of which secured a red and white silk and wool plaid into which was rolled an umbrella with a silver crook – and although his ticket was labelled Florence, he left the compartment and the train, walked along the shed, deposited his luggage at the cloak-room, lighted a cigar, thrust his hands – he carried neither stick nor umbrella - into his overcoat pockets, and left the station.

Outside in the damp, gloomy, and nearly empty square five or six hackney coachmen were snapping their whips, and a man with braided cap and long

cloak in which he huddled shivering inquired politely: "*Hotel zum braven Mann?* " Van der Qualen thanked him politely and held on his way. The people whom he met had their coat-collars turned up; he put his up too, nestled his chin into the velvet, smoked, and went his way, not slowly and not too fast.

He passed along a low wall and an old gate with two massive towers; he crossed a bridge with statues on the railings and saw the water rolling slow and turbid below. A long wooden boat, ancient and crumbling, came by, sculled by a man with a long pole in the stern. Van der Qualen stood for a while leaning over the rail of the bridge. "Here," he said to himself, "is a river; here is the river. It is nice to think that I call it that because I do not know its name." Then he went on.

He walked straight on for a little, on the pavement of a street which was neither very narrow nor very broad; then he turned off to the left. It was evening. The electric arc-lights came on, flickered, glowed, sputtered, and then illuminated the gloom. The shops were closing. "So we may say that it is in every respect autumn," thought van der Qualen, proceeding along the wet black pavement. He wore no galoshes, but his boots were very thick-soled, durable, and firm,-and withal not lacking in elegance.

He held to the left. Men moved past him, they hurried on their business or coming from it. "And I move with them," he thought, "and am as alone and as strange as probably no man has ever been before. I have no business and no goal. I have not even a stick to lean upon. More remote, freer, more detached, no one can be, I owe nothing to anybody, nobody owes anything

to me. God has never held out His hand over me, He knows me not at all. Honest unhappiness without charity is a good thing; a man can say to himself: I owe God nothing."

He soon came to the edge of the town. Probably he had slanted across it at about the middle. He found himself on a broad sub-urban street with trees and villas, turned to his right, passed three or four cross-streets almost like village lanes, lighted only by lanterns, and came to a stop in a somewhat wider one before a wooden door next to a commonplace house painted a dingy yellow, which had nevertheless the striking feature of very convex and quite opaque plate-glass windows. But on the door was a sign: "In this house on the third floor there are rooms to let." "Ah!" he remarked; tossed away the end of his cigar, passed through the door along a boarding which formed the dividing line between two properties, and then turned left through the door of the house itself. A shabby grey runner ran across the entry. He covered it in two steps and began to mount the simple wooden stair.

The doors to the several apartments were very modest too; they had white glass panes with woven wire over them and on some of them were name-plates. The landings were lighted by oil lamps. On the third storey, the top one, for the attic came next, were entrances right and left, simple brown doors without name-plates. Van der Qualen pulled the brass bell in the middle. It rang, but there was no sign from within. He knocked left. No answer. He knocked right. He heard light steps within, very long, like strides, and the door opened.

A woman stood there, a lady, tall, lean, and old. She wore a cap with a large pale-lilac bow, and an old-fashioned, faded black gown. She had a sunken birdlike face and on her brow there was an eruption, a sort of fungus growth. It was rather repulsive.

" Good evening," said van der Qualen. " The rooms? "

The old lady nodded, she nodded and smiled slowly, without a word, understandingly, and with her beautiful long white hand made a slow, languid, and elegant gesture towards the next, the left-hand door. Then she retired and appeared again with a key. " Look," he thought, standing behind her as she unlocked the door; "you are like some kind of banshee, a figure out of Hoffmann, madam" She took the oil lamp from its hook and ushered him in.

It was a small, low-ceiled room with a brown floor. Its walls were covered with straw-coloured matting. There was a window at the back in the right-hand wall, shrouded in long, thin white muslin folds. A white door also on the right led into the next room. This room was pathetically bare, with staring white walls, against which three straw chairs, painted pink, stood out like strawberries from whipped cream. A wardrobe, a washing-stand with a mirror ... The bed, a mammoth mahogany piece, stood free in the middle of the room.

" Have you any objections! " asked the old woman, and passed her lovely long, white hand lightly over the fungus growth on her forehead. - It was as

though she had said that by accident because she could not think for the moment of a more ordinary phrase. For she added at once: " – so to speak?"

"No, I have no objections," said van der Qualen. "The rooms are rather cleverly furnished. I will take them. I'd like to have somebody fetch my luggage from the station, here is the ticket. You will be kind enough to make up the bed and give me some water. I'll take the house key now, and the key to the apartment. I'd like a couple of towels. I'll wash up and go into the city for supper and come back later."

He drew a nickel case out of his pocket, took out some soap, and began to wash his face and hands, looking as he did so through the convex window-panes far down over the muddy, gas-lit sub-urban streets, over the arc-lights and the villas. - As he dried his hands he went over to the wardrobe. It was a square one, varnished brown, rather shaky, with a simple curved top. It stood in the centre of the right-hand wall exactly in the niche of a second white door, which of course led into the rooms to which the main and middle door on the landing gave access. "Here is something in the world that is well arranged," thought van der Qualen. "This wardrobe fits into the door niche as though it were made for it."

He opened the wardrobe door. It was entirely empty, with several rows of hooks in the ceiling; but it proved to have no back, being closed behind by a piece of rough common grey burlap, fastened by nails or tacks at the four corners.

Van der Qualen closed the wardrobe door, took his hat, turned up the collar of his coat once more, Put out the candle, and set forth. As he went through the front room he thought to hear mingled with the sound of his own steps a sort of ringing in the other room: a soft, clear, metallic sound – but perhaps he was mistaken. As though a gold ring were to fall into a silver basin, he thought, as he locked the outer door. He went down the steps and out of the gate and took the way to the town.

In a busy street he entered a lighted restaurant and sat down at one of the front tables, turning his back to all the world. He ate a *soupe aux fines herbes* with croutons, a steak with a poached egg, a compote and wine, a small piece of green gorgonzola and half a pear. While he paid and put on his coat he took a few puffs from a Russian cigarette. then lighted a cigar and went out. He strolled for a while, found his homeward route into the suburb, and went leisurely back.

The house with the plate-glass windows lay quite dark and silent when van der Qualen opened the house door and mounted the dim stair. He lighted himself with matches as he went and opened the left-hand brown door in the third storey. He laid hat and overcoat on the divan, lighted the lamp on the big writing-table, and found there his hand-bag as well as the plaid and umbrella. He unrolled the plaid and got a bottle of cognac, then a little glass and took a sip now and then as he sat in the arm-chair finishing his cigar. "How fortunate, after all," thought he, "that there is cognac in the world." Then he went into the bedroom, where he lighted the candle on the night-table, Put out the light in the other room, and began to undress.

Piece by piece he put down his good, unobtrusive grey suit on the red chair beside the bed; but then as he loosened his braces he remembered his hat and overcoat, which still lay on the couch. He fetched them into the bedroom and opened the wardrobe ... He took a step backwards and reached behind him to clutch one of the large dark-red mahogany balls which ornamented the bedposts. The room, with its four white walls, from which the three pink chairs stood out like strawberries from whipped cream, lay in the unstable light of the candle.

But the wardrobe over there was open and, it was not empty. Somebody was standing in it, a creature so lovely that Albrecht van der Qualen's heart stood still a moment and then in long, deep, quiet throbs resumed its beating- She was quite nude and one of her slender arms reached up to crook a forefinger round one of the hooks in the ceiling of the wardrobe. Long waves of brown hair rested on the childlike shoulders – they breathed that charm to which the only answer is a sob.

The candlelight was mirrored in her narrow black eyes. Her mouth was a little large, but it had an expression as sweet as the lips of sleep when after long days of pain they kiss our brow. Her ankles nestled and her slender limbs clung to one another.

Albrecht van der Qualen rubbed one hand over his eyes and stared and he saw that down in the right corner the sacking was loosened from the back of the wardrobe. "What – " said he ... "won't you come in – or how should I put it-out? Have a little glass of cognac? Half a glass? "But he expected no answer to this -and he got none. Her narrow, shining eyes, so very black that

they seemed bottomless and inexpressive – they were directed upon him, but aimlessly and somewhat blurred, as though they did not see him.

“Shall I tell you a story?” she said suddenly in a low, husky voice.

"Tell me a story," he answered' He had sunk down in- a sitting posture on the edge of the bed, his overcoat lay across his knees with his folded hands resting upon it. His mouth stood a little open, his eyes half-closed. But the blood pulsated warm and mildly through his body and there was a gentle singing in his ears.

She had let herself down in the cupboard and embraced a drawn-up knee with her slender arms, while the other leg stretched out before her. Her little breasts were pressed together by her upper arm, and the light gleamed on the skin of her flexed knee. She talked ... talked in a soft voice, while the candle-flame performed its noiseless dance.

Two walked on the heath and her head lay on his shoulder. There was a perfume from all growing things, but the evening mist already rose from the ground. So it began. And often it was in verse, rhyming in that incomparably sweet and flowing way that comes to us now and again in the half-slumber of fever. But it ended badly; a sad ending: the two holding each other indissolubly embraced, and while their lips rest on each other, one stabbing the other above the waist with a broad knife – and not without good cause. So it ended. And then she stood up with an infinitely sweet and modest gesture, lifted the grey sacking at the right-hand corner – and was no more there.

From now on he found her every evening in his wardrobe and listened to her stories – how many evenings? How many days, weeks, or months did he remain in this house and in this city? It would profit nobody to know. Who would care for a miserable statistic! And we are aware that Albrecht van der Qualen had been told by several physicians that he had but a few months to live. She told him stories.

They were sad stories, without relief; but they rested like a sweet burden upon the heart and made it beat longer and more blissfully. Often he forgot himself – His blood swelled up in him, he stretched out his hands to her, and she did not resist him. But then for several evenings he did not find her in the wardrobe, and when she came back she did not tell him anything for several evenings and then by degrees resumed, until he again forgot himself.

How long it lasted – who knows? Who even knows whether Albrecht van der Qualen actually awoke on that grey afternoon and went into the unknown city; whether he did nor remain asleep in his first-class carriage and let the Berlin-Rome express bear him swiftly over the mountains? Would any of us care to take the responsibility of giving a definite answer? It is all uncertain.

"Everything must be in the air "

Psyche and Cupid

by Apuleius

{A modern day translation and transcription from Latin}

Eons ago, through destiny that even rules the Gods, once upon a time love gave an immortal heart to a mortal maiden. And this is how this marvel came to pass.

There was a king who had three beautiful daughters. The two eldest married renown princes; but young Psyche was so radiant that no suitor thought themselves worthy of her. People thronged to see her pass through the city, and sang hymns in her praise, while strangers believed her to be the very goddess of beauty herself.

Peering down from Heaven above this mortal praise angered the immortal Goddess Venus. Venus resolved to cast down her Earthly rival, so she called forth her son Cupid, the harbinger of Love, and bade him sharpen his amorous arrows. Cupid is an archer more dreaded than Apollo, for while Apollo's arrows may swiftly bring an end to your life, Cupid's golden arrows may pain your heart with endless joy or sorrow if you are touched by his golden arrow.

"Come, my son," said Venus. "There is a mortal maid who robs me of my Earthly honors. Avenge your mother. Prick this precious maid, and let

Psyche fall in love with some churlish creature, cruel in the eyes of mortal men.”

Invisibly Cupid made ready his weapons, and set down to Earth. At that moment Psyche was asleep in her bedchamber; he laid bare her breast and touched her heart with his golden arrow of Love. Feeling the pang she opened her eyes so suddenly that he started (forgetting that he was invisible), and pricked himself with the same arrow. Heedless of his own hurt, and moved deeply by Psyche’s beauty, his heart softened, and he hastened to undo his misdeed. Back to her dream the princess went, unmoved by any thought of love. But Cupid, now very much in love with Psyche, returned to the heavenly place saying not a word of what had passed.

Venus waited; then, seeing that Psyche’s heart had somehow escaped love, figured that Cupid’s arrow had failed to hit its mark. In spite Venus set a malevolent curse upon the maiden. From that time, beautiful as Psyche was, not a suitor came to court her; and her parents, who desired to see her as a queen, married asked an Oracle for his counsel. He explained what had happened and also said the city state and its citizens who had praised Psyche shall also be harmed.

Solemnly the Oracle said: “Your princess daughter Psyche shall never wed a mere mortal. She shall be given to one who shall overcome the gods, and pains for her up above.”

At this terrible utterance Psyche’s parents were half distraught, and once told the people gave themselves up to grief at the fate in store for their beloved

princess. Psyche alone bowed to her destiny. “I have angered Venus unwittingly,” she said, “and all for the sake of me, heedless maiden that I am! Give me up, therefore, dear father and mother. If I atone, it may be that the city will prosper once more.”

So she besought them, until, after many unavailing pleadings, the parents consented; and with a great company of people they led Psyche up the mountain—as an offering to the monster of whom the Oracle had spoken—and left her there alone.

Full of courage, yet in a secret agony of grief she watched her kindred and her people wind down the mountain-path, too sad to look back, until they were lost to sight. Then, indeed, she wept, but a sudden breeze drew near, dried her tears, and caressed her hair, seeming to murmur comfort. In truth, it was Zephyr, the kindly West Wind, come to befriend her; and as she took heart, feeling some benignant presence, he lifted her in his arms, and carried her on wings as even as a seagull’s over the crest of the fateful mountain and into a valley below. There he left her, resting on a bank of hospitable grass, and there the princess fell asleep.

When she awoke, it was near sunset. She looked about her for some sign of the monster’s approach; she wondered, then, if her grievous trial had been but a dream. Near by she saw a sheltering forest, whose young trees, seemed to beckon as one maid beckons to another; and eager for the protection of the dryads, she went thither.

The call of running waters drew her farther and farther, till she came out upon an open place, where there was a wide pool. A fountain fluttered gladly in the midst of it, and beyond there stretched a white palace wonderful to see. Coaxed by the bright promise of the place, she drew near, and, seeing no one, entered softly. It was all kinglier than her father's home, and as she stood in wonder and awe, soft airs stirred about her. Little by little the silence grew murmurous like the woods, and one voice, sweeter than the rest, took words. "All that you see is yours, gentle high princess," it said. "Fear nothing; only command us, for we are here to serve you."

Full of amazement and delight, Psyche followed the voice from hall to hall, and through the lordly rooms, beautiful with everything that could delight a young princess. No pleasant thing was lacking. There was even a pool, brightly tiled and fed with running waters where she bathed her weary limbs; and after she had put on the new and beautiful raiment that lay ready for her, she sat down to break her fast, waited upon and sung to by the unseen spirits.

Surely he whom the Oracle had called her husband was no monster, but some beneficent power, invisible like all the rest. When daylight waned he came, and his voice, the beautiful voice of a god, inspired her to trust her strange destiny and to look and long for his return. Often she begged him to stay with her through the day, that she might see his face; but this he would not grant.

"Never doubt me, dearest Psyche," said he. "Perhaps you would fear if you saw me, and love is all I ask. There is a necessity that keeps me hidden now. Only believe."

So for many days Psyche was content; but when she grew used to happiness, she thought once more of her parents mourning her as lost, and of her sisters who shared the lot of mortals while she lived as a goddess. One night she told her husband of these regrets, and begged that her sisters at least might come to see her. He sighed, but did not refuse.

“Zephyr shall bring them hither,” said he. And on the following morning, swift as a bird, the West Wind came over the crest of the high mountain and down into the enchanted valley, bearing her two sisters.

They greeted Psyche with joy and amazement, hardly knowing how they had come hither. But when this fairest of the sisters led them through her palace and showed them all the treasures that were hers, envy grew in their hearts and choked their old love. Even while they sat at feast with her, they grew more and more bitter; and hoping to find some little flaw in her good fortune, they asked a thousand questions.

“Where is your husband?” said they. “And why is he not here with you?”

“Ah,” stammered Psyche. “All the day long—he is gone, hunting upon the mountains.”

“But what does he look like?” they asked; and Psyche could find no answer.

When they learned that she had never seen him, they laughed her faith to scorn.

“Poor Psyche,” they said. “You are walking in a dream. Wake, before it is too late. Have you forgotten what the Oracle decreed,—that you were destined for a dreadful creature, the fear of gods and men? And are you deceived by this show of kindness? We have come to warn you. The people told us, as we came over the mountain, that your husband is a dragon, who feeds you well for the present, that he may feast the better some day soon. What is it that you trust? Good words! But only take a dagger some night, and when the monster is asleep go, light a lamp, and look at him. You can put him to death easily, and all his riches will be yours—and ours.”

Psyche heard this wicked plan with horror. Nevertheless, after her sisters were gone, she brooded over what they had said, not seeing their evil intent; and she came to find some wisdom in their words. Little by little, suspicion ate, like a moth, into her lovely mind; and at nightfall, in shame and fear, she hid a lamp and a dagger in her chamber. Towards midnight, when her husband was fast asleep, up she rose, hardly daring to breathe; and coming softly to his side, she uncovered the lamp to see some horror.

But there the youngest of the gods lay sleeping,—most beautiful, most irresistible of all immortals. His hair shone golden as the sun, his face was radiant as dear Springtime, and from his shoulders sprang two rainbow wings.

Poor Psyche was overcome with self-reproach. As she leaned towards him, filled with worship, her trembling hands held the lamp ill, and some burning oil fell upon Love’s shoulder and awakened him.

He opened his eyes, to see at once his bride and the dark suspicion in her heart.

“O doubting Psyche,” he exclaimed with sudden grief,—and then he flew away, out of the window.

Wild with sorrow, Psyche tried to follow, but she fell to the ground instead. When she recovered her senses, she stared about her. She was alone, and the place was beautiful no longer. Garden and palace had vanished with Love.

Over mountains and valleys Psyche journeyed alone until she came to the city where her two envious sisters lived with the princes whom they had married. She stayed with them only long enough to tell the story of her unbelief and its penalty. Then she set out again to search for Love.

As she wandered one day, travel-worn but not hopeless, she saw a lofty palace on a hill near by, and she turned her steps thither. The place seemed deserted. Within the hall she saw no human being,—only heaps of grain, loose ears of corn half torn from the husk, wheat, and barley, alike scattered in confusion on the floor. Without delay, she set to work binding the sheaves together and gathering the scattered ears of corn in seemly wise, as a princess would wish to see them. While she was in the midst of her task, a voice startled her, and she looked up to behold Demeter herself, the goddess of the harvest, smiling upon her with good will.

“Dear Psyche,” said Demeter, “you are worthy of happiness, and you may find it yet. But since you have displeased Venus, go to her and ask her favour. Perhaps your patience will win her pardon.”

These motherly words gave Psyche heart, and she reverently took leave of the goddess and set out for the temple of Venus. Most humbly she offered up her prayer, but Venus could not look at her earthly beauty without anger.

“Vain girl,” said she, “perhaps you have come to make amends for the wound you dealt your husband; you shall do so. Such clever people can always find work!”

Then she led Psyche into a great chamber heaped high with mingled grain, beans, and lintels (the food of her doves), and bade her separate them all and have them ready in seemly fashion by night. Heracles would have been helpless before such a vexatious task; and poor Psyche, left alone in this desert of grain, had not courage to begin. But even as she sat there, a moving thread of black crawled across the floor from a crevice in the wall; and bending nearer, she saw that a great army of ants in columns had come to her aid. The zealous little creatures worked in swarms, with such industry over the work they like best, that, when Venus came at night, she found the task completed.

“Deceitful girl,” she cried, shaking the roses out of her hair with impatience, “this is my son’s work, not yours. But he will soon forget you. Eat this black bread if you are hungry and refresh your dull mind with sleep. Tomorrow you will need more wit.”

Psyche wondered what new misfortune could be in store for her. But when morning came, Venus led her to the brink of a river, and, pointing to the wood across the water, said, “Go now to yonder grove where the sheep with the golden fleece are wont to browse. Bring me a golden lock from every one of them, or you must go your ways and never come back again.”

This seemed not difficult, and Psyche obediently bade the goddess farewell, and stepped into the water, ready to wade across. But as Venus disappeared, the reeds sang louder and the nymphs of the river, looking up sweetly, blew bubbles to the surface and murmured: “Nay, nay, have a care, Psyche. This flock has not the gentle ways of sheep. While the sun burns aloft, they are themselves as fierce as flame; but when the shadows are long, they go to rest and sleep, under the trees; and you may cross the river without fear and pick the golden fleece off the briers in the pasture.”

Thanking the water-creatures, Psyche sat down to rest near them, and when the time came, she crossed in safety and followed their counsel. By twilight she returned to Venus with her arms full of shining fleece.

“No mortal wit did this,” said Venus angrily. “But if you care to prove your readiness, go now, with this little box, down to Proserpina and ask her to enclose in it some of her beauty, for I have grown pale in caring for my wounded son.”

“It needed not the last taunt to sadden Psyche. She knew that it was not for mortals to go into Hades and return alive; and feeling that Love had forsaken her, she was minded to accept her doom as soon as might be.

But even as she hastened towards the descent, another friendly voice detained her. “Stay, Psyche, I know your grief. Only give ear and you shall learn a safe way through all these trials.” And the voice went on to tell her how one might avoid all the dangers of Hades and come out unscathed. (But such a secret could not pass from mouth to mouth, with the rest of the story.)

“And be sure,” added the voice, “when Proserpina has returned the box, not to open it, however much you may long to do so.”

Psyche gave heed, and by this device, whatever it was, she found her way into Hades safely, and made her errand known to Proserpina, and was soon in the upper world again, wearied but hopeful.

“Surely Love has not forgotten me,” she said. “But humbled as I am and worn with toil, how shall I ever please him? Venus can never need all the beauty in this casket; and since I use it for Love’s sake, it must be right to take some.” So saying, she opened the box, headless as Pandora! The spells and potions of Hades are not for mortal maids, and no sooner had she inhaled the strange aroma than she fell down like one dead, quite overcome.

But it happened that Love himself was recovered from his wound, and he had secretly fled from his chamber to seek out and rescue Psyche. He found

her lying by the wayside; he gathered into the casket what remained of the philter, and awoke his beloved.

“Take comfort,” he said, smiling. “Return to our mother and do her bidding till I come again.”

Away he flew; and while Psyche went cheerily homeward, he hastened up to Olympus, where all the gods sat feasting, and begged them to intercede for him with his angry mother.

They heard his story and their hearts were touched. Zeus himself coaxed Venus with kind words till at last she relented, and remembered that anger hurt her beauty, and smiled once more. All the younger gods were for welcoming Psyche at once, and Hermes was sent to bring her hither. The maiden came, a shy newcomer among these bright creatures. She took the cup that Hebe held out to her, drank the divine ambrosia, and became immortal.

Light came to her face like moon rise, two radiant wings sprang from her shoulders; and even as a butterfly bursts from its dull cocoon, so the human Psyche blossomed into immortality.

Love took her by the hand, and they were never parted any more.

Falling in Love with a Beast

by Emily Mathews

[**Vancouver**] Why does Beauty fall in love with the Beast? Why does the well bred, well mannered lady fall in love with the mysterious and social outcast? He is the object of fear within the community and yet Beauty still falls in love with his beastly form. This inexplicable idea has taken allegorical form, evolved into myth, and has become a common motif that we see in modern fairy tales and storytelling today.

The evolution of the Beauty and the Beast motif results in a development of the original archetypal characters. In C. S. Lewis's novel *Till We Have Faces* he develops the concept that in myth human sympathy is at a minimum. All the characters are like shapes moving in another world. Meyer, in his discussion of *Till We Have Faces*, argues that even though Lewis titles the novel as a retelling of the myth, it is in fact not. Lewis' own characterization of myth works against it "since the psychology of the characters is a major interest." (Meyer 184). Likewise, in modern retellings of Beauty and the Beast, the mythic tale has changed to adopt to the fairy tale genre. It is no longer myth but a fairy tale. Despite the fundamental differences however, the fairy tale could not exist without the original mythic elements.

The Development of the Myth: The Tale of Cupid and Psyche

The predominant, earliest written example of the Beauty and the Beast tale is Apuleius' allegorical *Metamorphoses* (Accardo 53). The tale is of a beautiful mortal girl, whose beauty is so exulted that the goddess Venus becomes jealous. As punishment Psyche is sent to marry a monstrous beast "[not] sprung from a bloodline is humans – Only a fell, snake-like beast, wild, sadistic, and cruel." (trans. Relihan 10). Psyche bravely faces her fate but upon seeing her beauty Cupid (who was to escort her to her doom) defies her mother's wishes and decides to take and marry her herself.



Cupid and Psyche by Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1792)

By day Psyche is served by invisible servants and by night her husband, who remains faceless and nameless, enters her bed chambers. One day, after begging to see her sisters, they jealously convince Psyche to look upon the

face of her husband, despite his admonitions not to. Psyche does so and as she is looking upon the face his inhumanly handsome face, oil from her lamp splashes onto his shoulder and wakes him. Cupid leaves Psyche and in despair she attempts to drown herself in a river, but the river will not allow her. Venus finds out about Psyche and attempts to kill her by setting three impossible tasks. If she succeeds then she will be with Cupid again. With help she is successful in all except the final task. Upon returning from the underworld with Persephone's beauty in a box, Psyche's curiosity gets the better of her and she opens it despite specific instructions not to. She falls unconscious and it is only through Cupid's pleas to Juno (Zeus) that Psyche is brought back to life and is made immortal (sum. Relihan).

It has been suggested by Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton that Apuleius got his ideas from early Hindu stories, however there is little to no evidence of that (Accardo 53). However, if this was true it would support the idea that certain basic archetypes appear repeatedly within certain motifs. These characters encompass basic archetypes that are the basis for later fairy tale characters. In the following passage Pasquale Accardo suggests that:

“What is just as often ignored is the extent to which the themes that recur throughout Apuleius' novel prefigure almost all the major fairy-tale themes: the simpleton who succeeds, the youngest child who surpasses the older siblings, the evil witch/stepmother (Venus), the king elves, helpful animals, insects and birds, cannibalistic ogre (Cupid, the dragon/serpent), terrifying beasts, the clumsy, stupid giant (Lucius as an ass), tales that provide unending feasts, invisibility, captivating music, magical transformations, shrews that need to be

tamed, seven-league boots (rapid travel), and enchanted swords and clubs to vanquish any opposing powers. The literary Apuleius might be considered the father of the entire fairy-tale genre.” (Accardo 48).

Thus, Accardo *argues* that the basic characteristics of Cupid and Psyche transcends generations, appearing in ever popular tales such as Beauty and the Beast, East of the Sun and West of the Moon and King Kong. Psyche’s royal family can be applied perfectly within the modern world, and isn’t that the defining element of the archetype? You’ll never see the embodiment of an archetype, but you will see the recurring symbol of one. Jung used the terms “motifs” and “primordial images” to stand for “archetypes,” saying that “the archetype is a tendency to form such a representations of a motif – representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern. There are, for instance, many representations of the motif of the hostile brethren, but the motif remains the same.” (qtd. Snider 4,5).

The role of the wicked stepmother that has become the staple in fairy tales makes her first appearance in *Metamorphoses* in the form of Venus. She enlists her son Cupid to destroy Psyche, her rival in beauty. Venus’ antagonism towards Psyche incites Cupid’s clandestine marriage to Psyche, resulting in Venus’ jealousy of Psyche. His mother then turns him into an unseen presence that impels Psyche to believe that her husband is a monstrous beast. The idea is encouraged by her jealous sisters who envy Psyche’s God-husband and beautiful palace. These archetypal characters are manifested repeatedly until the wicked step-mother and sisters become the typical fairy tale antagonists.

Looking at Stith Thompson's book on studying folktales, he examines Wilhelm Grimm's explorations into how these resemblances and identical plots can be explained within myth and fairy tales.

“[Myth's] significance has long been lost, but it is still felt and imparts values to the story, while satisfying the natural pleasure in the wonderful ... as gentler and more human manners develop themselves and the sensuous richness of fiction increases, the mythical element retires into the background and begins to shroud itself in the mists of distance, which weaken the distinctness of the outlines but enhance the charms of the fiction.” (qtd. Thompson 370)

This suggests that all folktales are broken down myths. Thompson later goes on to create a classification index that lists all the various ‘types’ of folktales and myths, thus allowing for “recognition of these resemblances ... [that] brings scholar[s] closer to an understanding of human culture.” (Thompson 6). The tale of Beauty and the Beast is a ‘type’ of myth that recurs. It suggests that there is a common theme of taming ‘bestial’ love of ‘savage’ love throughout many cultures.

Beyond the Archetypes: Till We Have Faces

C. S. Lewis' novel *Till We Have Faces* does not aim to create a fairy tale. Rather in his novel we see Lewis fleshing out and developing the original myth from the point of view of Psyche's sister. Lewis states that “nothing was further from my aim than to recapture the peculiar quality of the *Metamorphoses* – that strange compound of picaresque novel, horror, comic,

mystagogue's [sic] tract, pornography, and stylistic experiment." (Lewis 313) Lewis' narrative differs from myth in that the psychology of the characters plays a major role. For example, the royal family in Lewis' version would fit perfectly in the modern day: "Redival, the rebellious, slightly slutty daughter; Psyche, the saintly one; Orual, the misfit; and Trom, the abusive father." (Meyers 184). In addition, myths always deal with the fantastical. Lewis changes these unexplainable occurrences so that they inhabit dreams and visions.



Cupid Finding Psyche by Sir Edward- Burne Jones (1866)

C. S. Lewis' novel *Till We Have Faces* is the same myth but retold from the point of view of one of the sisters. What makes it different from Apuleius' version is instead of a fairy tale-like setting, *Till We Have Faces* is specifically set in a country called Glome that are ruled by kings who have

names and faces. This brings a sense of realism; the reader is under the illusion that the narrator is in real place and time bringing us into a literary world.

The most important deviation from Apuleius's version is that Lewis makes Psyche's palace invisible to her sister's eyes. Orual cannot see it because at first it "seems that Orual is too hard-headed, too much of a realist, too scientifically objective, to enter into Psyche's fantasy." Orual chooses what "data [she] will pay attention to, and which she will ignore." (Myers 64) In the myth there is the assumption that fantastical things are everyday commonplace occurrences. Lewis' character Orual denies these magical reasoning and explanations. Her vehement refusal of Psyche's offer to get her husband to enable Orual to see the invisible castle: "I don't want it. I hate it. Hate it, hate it" is evidence of her closed mind (Lewis 124). This is quite unlike myths where magical explanations are accepted and are seen as rational.

Apuleius reveals a myth that enlightens us with stories that bear no realism and are told from an omniscient point of view. This distances the audience from the characters. In contrast, Lewis tells us his tale from a first person narrative. From Apuleius' omniscient point of view the reader is able to observe everything within the worlds of the Gods and the mortals. The reader is present in every scene and we are able to follow Psyche through her trials and tribulations. We are privy to thoughts and deeds, and the political, self-centered squabbling that the Gods take part in. In *Till We Have Faces* the reader is exposed to only a biased perspective, limited to only what Orual knows. The private lives of the Gods remain just that,

private. We don't get an insider look into the marriage of Psyche and Cupid, only glimpses. This allows us for a more realistic viewpoint and "certainly more modern, for twentieth-century authors play on our awareness that knowledge is partial and witnesses often unreliable." (Myers 150) We are immersed in a world of empirical fact; everything that a myth encompasses (magic, gods, miracles) may exist but is not touched upon in Lewis' novel. Instead, Lewis attempts to reconcile myth with "real things" which explains the tension between reason and imagination throughout the book. (Schakel 111)

The Development of the Romantic Fairy Tale: Beauty and the Beast

The type of comic romance to which 'Psyche and Cupid' belongs is a compilation of translated stories that are now known only through later retelling. "The connection of old women's speech and the consolatory, erotic, often fanciful fable appears deeply intertwined in language itself, and with women's speaking roles, as the etymology of 'fairy' illuminates." (Warner 14). Thus, the concept of the 'fairy tale' emerges through recycled and evolving retellings.

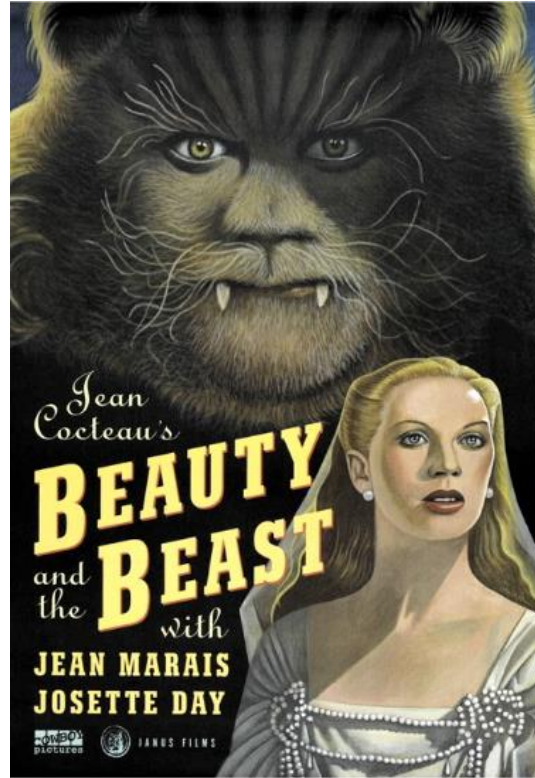
Beauty and the Beast has manifested from Apuleius' version to encompass the woman's voyage of inner discovery. "The demotion of the god who takes on human form and is imagined to be a beast, to a real beast who is an enchanted human being, has retained intact the successful form of the original story that has significantly diluted its deeper meaning" which is "[the] loving encounter between persons whose natures, whose level of being, are fundamentally different (Accardo 86). Simple put – Beauty is a

human girl and the Beast is an animal, yet they learn to love one another. This manifestation of man to Beast can be seen in the emergence of Madame Leprince de Beaumont's famous rendition of *Beauty and the Beast* written during the mid-eighteenth century." (Warner 297)

The fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* deviates from both Apuleius' myth and Lewis' novel in that Psyche's lover is *not* a beast. He is only concealed from her. She is actually wrong to fear him. In many ways "the inner structure of the Beauty and the Beast tale reverses the roles defined by the title – she has to learn the higher (human) wisdom of seeing past outward appearances, to grasp that monstrosity lies in the eye of the beholder, while the beast turns out to be irresistibly beautiful and the highest good." (Warner 275) The myth of Cupid and Psyche has a deeper meaning lying under the simple story: "The name [Psyche] invites such a response, of course. Psyche is the Greek word for "soul"; the story from the first has been allegorized as the human soul's quest for love." (Schakel 5) The fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* on the other hand is *not* allegorical and instead focuses on the female audience of the time.

"Romance – love in marriage – was an elusive ideal, which the writer of the *contes* sometimes set up in defiance of destiny ... The fairy tale of *Beauty and the Beast* assumed a female audience on the whole who fully expected to be given away by their fathers to men who might well strike them as monsters. The social revolution which has established both romantic and companionate marriage as the norm irreversibly altered the reception of such romances, and ironically transformed certain women's examination of their

matrimonial lot into materialistic propaganda for making a good marriage.
(Warner 278)



Jean Cocteau's Beauty and the Beast (1946)

Further, Cocteau's film *La Belle et la Bête* (1946) concentrates on awakening Beauty to the goodness of the Beast; "she has to see his unsightliness to the gentle and loving human being trapped inside." (*La Belle et la Bête*, Warner 295). The beast's anthropomorphic shape in the film, half man and half human, intensify the Beast's pitiful dilemma: his male desires deserve the reciprocating love a woman who would see past their eyes and listen to their heart.

The film concentrates on “men’s anguish in the face of female indifference, on the tenderness of masculine desire and the cruelty of the female response, rather than women’s vulnerability to male violence.” (ibid, 296). The mysterious femininity of the enchanted castle serves as the counterpart to the Beast’s savage masculinity. Without its feminine counterpart, the Beast cannot survive,



La Belle et la Bête (1946)

Interestingly, at the end of the movie, when the Beast is turned back into a man his human face is the same as the former rejected, aspiring lover Avenant. “So *La Belle et la Bête* traces a promise to male lovers that they will not always be rejected, that human lovers, however profligate, can be saved,” (ibid. 297). Mmme. Beaumont’s telling of Beauty and the Beast (of which *La Belle et la Bête* is based) has inspired the idea of female love and sympathy saving the man from the beast inside of him. To this day it continues to inspire; however, I suggest that because historical context changes with time, so much must the tale change.

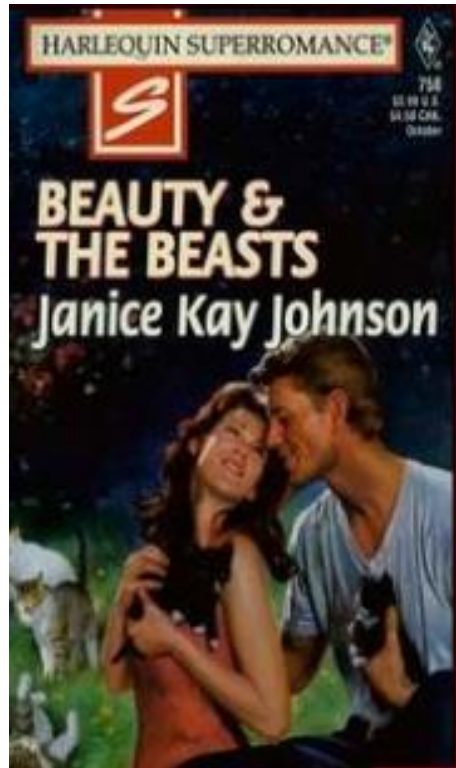
Alternatively, Betsy Hearne states, “the conditions determining the fate of Psyche and Beauty are totally different: Beauty’s is a test of the perception of the heart and mind, while Psyche, repeatedly characterized as simple of mind, is tested to blind obedience ...” (Hearne 11). In Jessica Tiffin’s book *Marvelous Geometry*, she goes into length of the interchangeability and a lack thereof of myth and fairy tale. She touches on Max Lüthi’s work and his formalist theory of ‘*isolation*’ in which fairy tale figures are separated from any background or context. “Their psychological processes are not illuminated: only their line of progress is in focus, only that which is relevant to the action,” says Lüthi (qtd. Tiffin 15). Ursula Le Guin furthers this idea in her discussion of Jungian archetype in fantasy. She argues that, “in fairy tale ... there is no ‘right’ and ‘wrong,’ there is a different standard, which is perhaps best called ‘appropriateness’ ... Under the conditions of fairy tale, in the language of archetypes, we can say with perfect conviction that it may be *appropriate* to [push an old lady into an oven].” She is suggesting why fairy tales (or we should say certain mythic motifs) survive over time and throughout a wide range of cultures.

That said, at the same time fairy tales are difficult to read symbolically because it is not an allegory. It *derives* from the allegory. The motifs, rather than meaning something specific, have resonance with the reader. Ursula Le Guin puts this another way: “a symbol is not a sign of something known, but an indicator of something not known and not expressible other than symbolically. [Students] mistake symbol (living meaning) with allegory (dead meanin)” (qtd. From Tiffin). There may be allegory inside the fairy tale, but as Gay Clifford puts it, “the allegorist wants to communicate certain

generalized formulations about the nature of the human experience ... and shapes his narrative so as to reveal these.” (qtd. From Tiffin 16)

In review, the tale of the Beauty and the Beast has had specific significance throughout the ages. In mythological form it is a tale of the soul’s quest for love. As we progress in time there is a search for deeper, psychological meaning within the myth. C. S. Lewis attempts this in his novel *Till We Have Faces*. In large part he succeeds as we get an insider’s look into the why and how of the original myth. However, we miss out the omniscient point of view that the original myth provides. Lastly, there are the fairy tales that derive from the myths and allegories. Fairy tales constantly adapt to the historical context around them. They take the bits and pieces from the original myth in order to make a familiar tale that will resonant with current audiences.

An interesting study and/or observation would be to look at a pocketbook and modern romance (e.g. Harlequin Romances, Silhouette Romances, popular suspense novels, etc.).



Harlequin SuperRomance from 1990's

The bad boy who's in touch with his '*inner beast*' is a constant attraction to females who believe they can '*tame*' him. Could this be a modern rendition of Beauty and the Beast?"

It could be ...

The Big Lie About Beautiful Women

by Louie Bolinger (Whisper Magazine, 1959)

The greatest fraud perpetrated on malekind started the day the first cave woman put a pat of red clay onto her cheeks and undulated past a loitering cave man. He quickly hoisted his club and pursued her. Since then, man's loftiest desire has been to be loved, to possess, marry and own a beautiful woman. Through the march of centuries this desire has endured—this bright fraud called “beauty” still blinds men.

What really is beauty? Beauty is ... a big lie.

Judging by today's beauty standards, Cleopatra could never have gotten a screen-test. She was large, over-weight, and her face was not unlike a dented pillow. But she conquered Caesar, the greatest Roman general—and reduced another Roman warrior, Marc Antony, to a quivering puppy grateful for any of her favors.

If a pretty face or a seductive figure were the only standard for beauty, then the marital rate would have been almost zero, long before man invented the game of statistics.

Queen Nefertiti of ancient Egypt was considered a raving beauty. She painted herself in vivid greens and bright reds and garish purples and dressed in skin-tight, almost transparent clothes. She was a slender, sylph-

like woman who (if her attire allowed movement) would have slinked along the palace corridors like a shining minx trying to attract a lusty lion. But such a raving beauty would today be judged a raving lunatic.

In the 17th Century, the era of that great artist, Rubens, a female with the painfully thin proportions of Lauren Bacall or Debbie Reynolds would have been ignored for having too little curve and too much bone. Beauties of the 17th Century were women with abundant bosoms and full-blown hips. Today we'd refer to them as hippos.

The criteria for judging women as beautiful are as ever-changing as the position of the clouds. A British critic, Hancock, said, "A woman uncomely in face but golden in voice can win me." Anatole France, a connoisseur of French women, stated: "We have medicines to make women speak; we have none to make them keep silent."

What one man falls for—another man runs from.

In the colonial days of America there was no accurate way of appraising the full beauty of a woman. They were so corseted and smothered under heaps of clothing that the phrase "rugged pioneer women" probably arose from the fact that they needed to be "mighty of muscle" to tote the heaps of clothing they wore. And there was that tantalizing bustle—that deceptive bit of clothly fluff that hornswoggled many a frontiersman into believing he had snared a prize —only to learn that he had been hustled by a bustle.

The belles deemed most beautiful in the Sarasdjinges tribes of Africa are the damsels with the most elongated lips—lips that when fully developed are like walrus flaps. In Padaung, Burma, a female's beauty is appraised by the length of her neck. They stretch their necks by using brass rings, gradually adding rings until they seem like miniature giraffes. Women in the Sesere tribe are highly-prized and desperately desirable if their eyes are crossed. In North Africa the more obese the maid, the larger the following of eager swains.

Beauty expert Vincent Trotta has, from his vast experience with beauty contests, devised a set of rules for determining contest winners: "An imaginary line through the center of the head must pass through the center of the neck and torso, dividing the legs. The projection of this line must pass through the center of the body and between the two heels. The shoulders must be wider than the hip and slope at a 20 degree angle from the neck to the tip of the shoulders. The neck must be graceful and full enough to act as a pedestal to the head.

"The arms must flow along the sides and act as a frame to the body. The legs must fuse at the hips, knees, calves, the heels to join together with little space shown separating the legs. The head should be the crowning glory of the body, the hair-do serving as a frame for the head. No hard edges or lines should separate the face from the hair.

"The lines of the arms should be full but graceful. The fingers slender, neither bony or pudgy, nails well-groomed. According to the height of the

girl, bosom should be well-proportioned and NOT accentuated. The back should be well-proportioned, flat and with no lateral curvature.”

Is this one in fifty thousand anatomical miracle really the source of a woman’s true beauty? What about the strange and mystifying depths sheltered in her heart and mind and soul? And after all, without a man around, a woman is just a female.

However, H. L. Mencken, an expert on almost all aspects of civilization, including WOMEN, has expressed his opinion about the structure of the female.

“The female body, even at its best, is very defective in form; it has harsh curves and very clumsily distributed masses; compared to it the average milk-jug, or even cuspidor, is a thing of intelligent and gratifying design . . . Below the neck by the bow and below the waist astern there are two masses that simply refuse to fit into a balanced composition. Viewed from the side, a woman presents an exaggerated S bisected by an imperfect straight line, and so she inevitably suggests a drunken dollar-mark.”

In contradiction to this thinking, Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote the eminently popular song, “There Is Nothing Like a Dame.” When the experts disagree, how can the average male know what he considers beauty as it is obvious that face and form do not total up to “total” beauty? And therein lies the big lie.

There are no specific factors upon which to hang the label “beauty”— there are only personal combinations which, when brought together, create the illusion of beauty.

The outstanding women of history were not the luscious Marilyn Monroes or the angelic Audrey Hepburns or the flashing-eyed, tempestuous tempered Rita Hay worths. The women who reduced kings to jelly and ruled the rulers of nations were women with vigorous, complex, exciting PERSONALITIES.

Salome was only thirteen years old when she danced and entranced the moguls of the world. Josephine had too many chins and a long pointed nose but her brilliance of mind and grandness of manner snared elusive Napoleon. Queen Elizabeth was bald, wrinkled and dumpy but she captured the love of the handsomest man of the day, Lord Essex. And the greatest woman of them all—the woman whose face could launch a thousand ships and whose kiss could make a man feel immortal—was beyond description and known only as Helen of Troy. Would she have launched only 500 ships if she had been pigeon-toed? Absolutely!

Our jet-age culture has contributed to the big beauty lie. Lands that were once too remote to reach are now within quick flying distance and the simple qualities that might have determined a woman’s beauty have now become a phantasmagoric mixture of racial blends.

Some men prefer the cultivated, aristocratic Frenchwoman; others choose the dark-eyed Italian type; some select the Moroccan belly-dancer while

another level of masculine taste favors the fiery Yugoslavian damsel. Many males are interested in the German house-frau while some are stirred by the peppery senorita and others are hypnotized by the veiled harem girl or the lusty Russian woman or the ivory-skinned, blonde haired Scandinavian. There are even those men who take to the American female typified (or deified) by the chic business woman in tailored attire or the doll in tight fitting dungarees.

But number them one after the other or put them all together and they still don't spell B-E-A-U-T-Y. Since beauty per se is such an intangible, elusive quality, the only clear way of indicating what beauty might be, is by describing the times when a woman is NOT beautiful.

Example: A woman will not ever be considered beautiful if, while casually chewing gum, she starts popping bubbles—or if, in a moment of loving tenderness she begins cracking her knuckles. A man of taste and breeding will never say, “She is so beautiful” about the, woman who hides her true face behind a make-up mask—or the woman who giggles before being kissed or whose mouth twists and wrinkles or whose voice is shrill when cooing sweet nothings. And no matter how grand or dramatic is a woman's manner, her flair and poise will vanish if during a luxurious dinner party she begins noisily picking her teeth.

Beauty is only skin deep. Her face may be arranged like a landslide of features and she may be built like a lumpy balloon—but if she can cultivate a vibrant personality and a perfect sense of timing—then she will always be considered a rare beauty.

To be what the man wants her to be exactly when he wants her to be it is the first attribute of a beautiful woman. Too many women are like the gorgeous doll who visited her boy friend in prison and gaped dumbly when he asked, “Did you bring the stuff?” She replied, “Not exactly, honey. I got the saw and the eggs and the flour and lard, but how in hell do you bake a cake?”

Another vital attribute of feminine allure is the capacity to inspire or enthuse a male and avoid conversations like the one overheard at a bar during the cocktail hour.

“Darling, do you adore the glow and texture of my hair, is it like newly spun silk?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Are my eyes limpid pools of desire, my lips kissable as rose petals, my nose aristocratic, my ear lobes-drops of delight?”

“Yep.”

“Does the scent of me intoxicate you, the touch of me thrill you, the sight of me send shivers through your soul?”

“Sure, dear.”

“Ooooh, darling, you say the nicest things.”

Fashion is another element necessary to the beautiful woman. But while most men enjoy escorting a well-groomed, well-dressed woman, they dislike a woman who is stylish to the point of being ridiculous—as ridiculous as the woman who related her latest dream to her psychiatrist. “I was walking down the street with nothing on but a hat” The psychiatrist asked, “Did you feel embarrassed?” The woman gushed, “Terribly embarrassed, doctor. It was last year’s hat.”

To be considered a beautiful woman, a woman must be sensitive to the man’s longings. Comfort him in his time of despair, be effervescent with enthusiasm as he pursues his ambitions, patient with his temper-tantrums, a laughing-girl when participating in his fun-loving nature— responsive to his intelligence and appreciative to his wisdom and kindly toward his little-boyishness—fashionable and proper when taken to his places of entertainment, indulgent when he is neglectful, overjoyed when he remembers your birthday, conservative when with company but abandoned when alone, tolerant when he is most vain and complimentary even when he develops a paunch; companionable when he is lonely and self-sacrificing when he insists’ upon teaching you how to exercise.

The big TRUTH about beauty is merely this. Regardless of her face or figure a woman can still be beautiful if she realizes that she cannot be beautiful to all men—but can be the most beautiful woman alive to one man. And even today one man is usually enough for any woman.

Four Poems About Me

by Clara P (Berlin, 2018)

Me

People always tell you that things don't define you.
The clothes you wear don't define you, they say.
The grades you get don't define you, they say.
What people think about you doesn't define you, they say.
But don't you want to be defined by something?
I don't want to be an undefined something anymore.
I want to be someone, stand for something.
But I don't know how to.
It seems impossible, yet it looks like everyone knows exactly what to do.
It is like a secret club, nobody invited me to, called "how to be"
But doesn't this lack of definition also give me all the freedom in the world?
I can be whatever and whoever I desire to be.
I am the person to define me, transition me from a human to a person.
And yet I don't know how to handle this power.

I Wish I Would Fit into a Laundry Machine.

Afterwards, I put my dirty t-shirt into the laundry machine.
I lay it in there, fill it up with some soap,
I see the colorful liquid pour into it,
so beautiful, I am almost tempted to try a bit of its forbidden taste.
And then I close the door.
I can see my shirt a last time, the way it is now.
When I will open that door again, it will be like today never happened.
A calming thought.
Because the laundry machine will have worked its wonders.
All the stains will be removed.
Nobody will be able to tell what substance touched it.
Nobody will see all the colors that were never supposed to be on there.
Its now rough fabric will be soft again, desirable to touch.
The strong sent of sweat, caused by paralyzing fear, will never be smelled again.
Only the pastel flowers, seen on the bottle of soap.
With this wash, my shirt will lose its memory.
Everything it went through, erased.
A blank start.

I wish I would fit into a laundry machine.

But I Don't Fear Death

People say,
you can do it sometime else,
you have time,
you have so much more time to live.

But do you?

Life is the shortest thing possible,
compare your 70, 80, maybe 90 years on planet earth,
with the infinity that existence will exist.

We are nothing,
and so is time.

So why worry?

You want to live?

Go the farthest away from life you can possible be.

You will meet life at the border to death.

You don't know what living means,
until you are happy about every time your heart contracts,
until you can feel every atom of oxygen filling your lungs.
Once you know how that feels like,
your life will be different.

Because now you are actually living,
not only having a life.

What is the worst that can happen?

You can die.

But why pay such a high price for knowing that you will have a couple more years here,
because some day, somehow, we will all die.
I will die, you will die, every living thing dies.

Death is what defines life.
Life is restricted, that is what makes it so valuable.
Every good thing has to come to an end,
and so does life.
But I don't fear death,
death isn't this scary thing we need to avoid with all our power.

Death is the most beautiful thing about living.
It should be what motivates you,
to actually experience life as long as you have it.
Once death comes to me,
I won't be in panic,
I won't try to convince him otherwise.
I will embrace him,
and be in peace with him, with me, with the universe.
I already can say that I lived,
and that is the only reason we are here.

Our time as living creatures is not about, who can stay on earth longer,
it is about how many experiences you can fit into your limited time here.
Once you accept that,
you will live the best life you will ever have.

No fears, no regrets.

Just life.

It was Like Hearing Morpheus's Voice

It was like

waking up in the morning,

hearing your alarm clock scream,

while still having the taste

of this dream

linger around in your mind.

A dream worth its name.

It was like

just laying in your bed

feeling as empty as sad

because the knowledge

that a dream is only that

weighs heavier than stone

and it presses you down

into a place you've never been

It was like

hearing Morpheus's voice

creep up in your head

explaining to you in every detail

what you will never have
because his reality is superior
and all you have of it
is a foggy memory of a face
and the vague feeling of a touch
by fingers

that never existed.
That was how leaving you felt like.

On Visiting Vancouver a Second Time

by Aki Kurosawa

[**Tokyo**] About ten years ago, in 2010, I visited Vancouver with my parents to come watch the Winter Olympics. This was the first time I had travelled outside of Japan. I was twelve. Before visiting Vancouver for the first time all the previous trips I took were to visit family and friend in different prefectures around Japan.

Four years ago I revisited Vancouver a second time, this time by myself. Well, actually not by myself ... but without my parents. I had graduated high-school but not started university and came for a two month visit to improve my English. I, along with six other Japanese women who were my friends, or friends of my friends, together decided to take a “learning-holiday” to Vancouver. We had all enrolled at the same language day school in downtown Vancouver, and were staying with different host families. One of us worked for JAL and was able to arrange affordable air fares for us all.

Of the seven of us, I was the only one who had visited Vancouver before and although I was not the oldest in the group (she was five years older than anyone else), I was chosen into the role of ‘big sister’ to the group. It turns out I spoke English the best of the group. You may have noticed that Japanese boys are very independent, while Japanese girls find their safety and comfort in groups.

In Japan we all study a second language in high school. Most decide to study English as a second language, some a European language like French, German or Italian, and some decide to learn Mandarin or Korean. My father is a petroleum trader for the Japanese Government who travels throughout the world. He is sometimes away for months. He has encouraged me and my younger sister to learn more than just two languages and so we have been learning several languages. I chose English and French – which I understand are the two official languages of Canada.

My youngest sister, just to be different, is learning both German and Russian. She dreams of one day taking a boat from Japan to Vladivostok and then the trans-Siberian railroad to St. Petersburg, and then onto Berlin. She is artistic and the avant garde one in our family, and is constantly rebellious. Perhaps it is because she is the youngest, or perhaps it was her love of the Pasternak film *Dr. Zhivago*? She hangs out with a Russian girl her age, Laura, who is a bit of a feline ... and who comes from Vladivostok. Her father teaches at university. Her mother stayed home in Russia. Laura comes to visit Japan when she is not at school.

The rest of the family are still trying to figure out why my younger sister wants to learn German? I think it is because she has heard that Berlin is a wild city ... which she wants to one day visit ...

My sister wanted to come with me to Vancouver to study English, but my parents decided against this. It wasn't merely because she is still in high-school it is also because she gets into trouble all the time. It was also

because of her cat like character ... she is very much a creature of the night ... constantly on the prowl for the life pleasures. Rumor has it that last year she appeared in a film of the night life of Tokyo that is ... not meant for our parents to see.

The fact that my younger sister is a rebel has been a secret incentive on me to be defiant too, but in my own secret way. It being my first trip alone ... my second trip to Vancouver might perhaps gave me the first freedom to be rebellious.

The oldest of our group of seven had just broken up with her long time boy friend. They had first met in high school and had been seeing each other for ten years. He was the only boy she had really gotten to know. They had broken up when she found out he was being unfaithful to her. They were a few months away from being married when she had broken their engagement. He ran off with the other girl, a teenager who was the very young sister of one of his 'old school friends.'

Her boy friend was ... a sponge off of her and so she was glad to be rid of him. He had no job ... did not want to go to university ... and didn't care that he still lived at home and spent all his free time playing video games. He is what we in Japan call Otaku.

She was the one who had a job with Japan Airlines and had arranged the special air fares for us. She was also who suggested the seven of us come for a learning-holiday in Vancouver. She came to Vancouver because she

needed a change of scenery. When she came she was sad ... and when she left she was happy again ... but in a very different way.

In actual fact the seven of us were very different from each other. The oldest of us was tall and slim, the youngest short and chubby and by chance the rest of us fit into a line of different hair styles, different clothes and different lifestyles, somewhere in between. Some of us were morning types and some night types. I was sort of in the middle. When we went out together I imagine that a perfect stranger would look at us and think that the only three things we had in common were that we were young, Japanese and women. But one man called us all girls!

I had to ask a Canadian friend what is the linguistic difference between being called a girl and being considered a women. He smiled and asked me, “Would you like an official definition or a colloquial one?”

Being curious I asked him for both.

“Officially,” he said, “a girl is a female who has yet to reach puberty ... and a women is one who now is fully herself ...” I sort of understood. “And the unofficial one?” I asked.

“Well “ he smiled, “ I don’t know you that well .. and I don’t want to shock you.” This only made me more curious and so I said “please tell me!”

“Here on the streets of Vancouver the definition of a girl and a woman is that they have had very different life experiences.” I still did not understand

him and so I frowned. He shrugged his shoulders “a girl is a virgin, and a woman is not ...”

“Is that the same difference between a boy and a man?” I immediately asked him.

“You tell me ,,,” he smiled. “I doubt any of you are girls.” I blushed when he said this. We changed the subject.

I would later find out that when we arrived in Vancouver two of the seven of us were in fact just that ... but none were by the time we had left for home. It’s not what you think though, for we have two expressions in Japan that a “coin has two sides ...” and “a coin is easily flipped.”

A week after we arrived the youngest of us, the chubby one, had her hair cut short and for most of her time in Vancouver dressed like a boy.

The other one found herself a ‘boy friend” and is now married to him and lives in Vancouver. He is one of the language instructors we had. She didn’t fly home with us at the end of our “learning-holiday.” She had come to Vancouver to stay. As I write this they are expecting a baby.

Our visits to Vancouver changed each of us, but in different ways. We were all happy to be in a smaller city with less people crowding around us. Vancouver might be a big city in Canada but it hardly compares to a small city on Japan. We were all happy to be distinct, instead of lost in a crowd of other black haired and black eyed Japanese, and well there is something

about being a Japanese ‘girl’ in the eyes of Canadian men that makes it easy for us to make new friends.

The seven of us had a different definition of what ‘being friends’ meant. The youngest of us had a friend who ... well ... was very different than all the others we met. Her friend was intense and quick to judge. We found it hard to be around her. The youngest didn’t mind for she was very submissive, more so than a Japanese woman normally is. And the play they got into was ‘very rough and tumble.’ But that is what she wanted.

About half-way through our stay in Vancouver she asked me to come with her to a ‘special event’ she had been invited to in Burnaby on a Saturday night at a place called “the dungeon.” The only reason I agreed to go was that all the others had turned her down and I was the last one she had to ask. Even though I wanted to, I could not say no. She being the youngest I felt an obligation to protect her. But in retrospect I am not sure she wanted to be ... protected.

I had heard that such places existed but never imagined I would ever find myself in one of them. There were three of us when we arrived, the youngest one, her ‘girlfriend’ and me as a chaperone of sorts. But after only a few minutes inside the dark and evil place, the two of them disappeared and I had to leave! It was something out of a cheap horror film. Why people would chose to allow themselves to be humiliated like this I will never know! She arrived several hours late at school on Monday wearing long socks and wrist bands to hide her ‘rough and tumble’. Neither of us talked about her ‘Saturday night.’ We sort of drifted apart after that. She also

stopped going to language school the middle of that week. She moved out from her home stay and in with her ‘girlfriend.’ That was the last we heard of her

I told my Canadian friend about this and he said it was her “Satyr-day night.” At first I did not understand what he meant, but he spelled it out for me. I asked him whether he had ever been at a place like this. He said no ... but in such a way that I felt I had to ask him “would you ever go to such a place?”

“It depends ...

“On what ?”

“I guess ... if I was going to watch or going to be watched”

I found his answer so unexpected. So I asked him what he meant. He suggested I ask my friend and so right then and there I called her up and spoke to her. When I asked her why ... I got a response I had not expected. “So desu!”

My Canadian friend does not speak Japanese but he recognized my exclamation and so after I got off the phone he asked and I told him. “She had gone not to watch ... but to be watched!”

“Are you surprised?” was what he asked before he raised his hand up to say stop! “Let’s talk about something else ...”. I wanted to talk with him about this but decided to wait another time.

The other four of us came to visit Vancouver for different reasons. One enjoyed hiking and quickly took to visiting the different parks in Vancouver and on the North Shore of Vancouver. On the weekdays she would all but disappear and then reappear in a very blissful state on Monday morning in our language school classes. In the space of a few weeks she had a lovely tan and many stories to share with us. At the last evening together she screened a compilation of different short films she had made of her hikes around Vancouver. I must admit then and there I regretted not tagging along on some of her hikes.

Three were in Vancouver to learn English. Two of my friends visited the UBC and SFU with the hope of going to university in Vancouver. One just enjoyed travelling and had been to Paris and Florence but had never been to Canada. She had heard very interesting stories about Vancouver and spent most of her free time exploring the city and enjoying the beach life. She had a date for every night of the week. She told us that her main goal in life was to enjoy herself “before it was too late.” The rest of us had our own ideas as to what she meant by “before it was too late.” I could not see her settling down and getting married ...

There was one hike all seven of us took together and that was to see part of Stanley Park. This was where I met my Canadian friend for the first time. He had offered to take one of us for a visit (they had both met at a Saturday

afternoon conversation club that gathered at a café on Granville Street near the waterfront station) and well ... since Japanese women always travel together, the other six of us showed up. We met him at the bus loop near the rose garden in Stanley Park. When he arrived he was amused to see six of us waiting for him and all of us waiting for the last one of us to join the group outing. She was not a morning person and we had made arrangements to meet at 10 and she was late as usual. When she arrived twenty minutes late she had not even had breakfast and so we had to dig in our bags to find her something to eat. Then we all set out to explore Stanley Park. We visited the aquarium and then walked back to the Rose garden and then past Lost Lagoon. We set off to English Bay and when we got there it was time to sit and rest.

I wanted to talk with him and so I sat next to my new Canadian friend.

He was both polite and charming and I instantly began to like him. I asked him why he wanted to take us on a tour of Stanley Park. "I am in paradise ... me and seven beautiful women!" We walked along the sea wall towards Kitsilano but decide to turn back because it was now 2 in the afternoon and there were things some of my friends had to do that afternoon.

As we walked back down Denman Street he treated us to ice cream. "It doesn't cost me a cent," he said. "I am an author and the ice cream is paid for out of my book royalty fund." I noticed though that he didn't order himself any ice cream. When I asked him why he joked and said "I am a growing boy ... but I am growing sideways." We were all very happy, even the chubby one. But then again she had a triple scoop! Just before we went

our separate ways on Georgia and Denman, and when no one was watching I gave him my email, and he gave me his.

After waiting a few days and not hearing from him I emailed him and the following Saturday, instead of going to the conversation club meeting he and I walked down Robson and then sat for coffee at a place that make wonderful poppy cake, which he suggested I try. Then we talked. Well ... I talked and he mostly listened. Most men like to talk about themselves but ... he just listened.

I asked him why he goes to the conversation club and he said it was to listen to stories. He like to write short stories and by listening to other people share their life experiences it gave him ideas for stories. I asked him if I had given him ideas and he smiled and said, enigmatically, “yes you have given me ideas ...”

“What kind?” I asked him.

“Romantic ones ...” He lowered his eyes and his voice as he said this. I sensed his shyness and his sincerity so I reached across the table and put my hand on his. It felt warm ... or it might have been my hand that was warm.

I felt wet between my legs. That had never really happen to me before. I had not come to Vancouver to fall in love ... but sometimes love is inevitable.

In Tokyo, back home, I had several friends who were ... well ... boyfriends of sorts but not any that I felt all that close to. I knew most of them from high school. It is expected that an eligible Japanese woman would date. It is expected that Japanese women would choose to either be a career woman or a wife. It was not expected that a Japanese woman would fall in love with a man half way around the world. I had to hide my feelings. But I found that very hard to do. I wasn't a girl any more!

For the rest of my visit to Vancouver I tried to find an excuse to see him at least twice a week and he sort of understood my feelings, but he was careful not to take advantage of me. He told me that as a Catholic he knew the difference between love and lust. He had once been married and I asked and he said he had no children of his own. There was a very sincere sadness in his eyes as he said this. "Things didn't work out."

It was the evening before I returned home we went for dinner and afterwards, as he walked me to my bus, I finally had the courage to ask him about his comment "are you surprised ... she wanted to be watched?"

He turned to me and whispered "In an empty life ... we all want to be noticed ..."

I kissed him on the cheek and did not turn back as I stepped onto the bus. I did not want him to see my tears.

On the Essence of Laughter

by Charles Baudelaire

I

I have no intention of writing a treatise on caricature: I simply want to acquaint the reader with certain reflections which have often occurred to me on the subject of this singular genre. These reflections had become a kind of obsession for me, and I wanted to get them off my chest. Nevertheless I have made every effort to impose some order, and thus to make their digestion more easy. This, then, is purely an artist's and a philosopher's article. No doubt a general history of caricature in its references to all the facts by which humanity has been stirred—facts political and religious, weighty or frivolous; facts relative to the disposition of the nation or to fashion—would be a glorious and important work. The task still remains to be done, for the essays which have been published up to the present are hardly more than raw materials. But I thought that this task should be divided. It is clear that a work on caricature, understood in this way, would be a history of facts, an immense gallery of anecdote. In caricature, far more than in the other branches of art, there are two sorts of works which are to be prized and commended for different and almost contrary reasons. One kind have value only by reason of the fact which they represent. No doubt they have a right to the attention of the historian, the archaeologist, and even the philosopher; they deserve to take their place in the national archives, in the biographical registers of human thought. Like the flysheets of journalism, they are swept

out of sight by the same tireless breeze which supplies us with fresh ones. But the others—and it is with these that I want to concern myself especially—contain a mysterious, lasting, eternal element, which recommends them to the attention of artists. What a curious thing, and one truly worthy of attention, is the introduction of this indefinable element of beauty, even in works which are intended to represent his proper ugliness—both moral and physical—to man! And what is no less mysterious is that this lamentable spectacle excites in him an undying and incorrigible mirth. Here, then, is the true subject of my article.

A doubt assails me. Should I reply with a formal demonstration to the kind of preliminary question which no doubt will be raised by certain spiteful pundits of solemnity charlatans of gravity, pedantic corpses which have emerged from the icy vaults of the *Institut* and have come again to the land of the living, like a band of miserly ghosts, to snatch a few coppers from the obliging administration? First of all, they would ask, is Caricature a genre? No, their cronies would reply. Caricature is not a genre. I have heard similar heresies ringing in my ears at academicians' dinners. It was these fine fellows who let the comedy of Robert Macaire slip past them without noticing any of its great moral and literary symptoms. [note: The character of Robert Macaire (in the play *L'Auberge des Adrets*) had been created by the actor Frederick Lemaitre, in the 1820s. Later Daumier developed the character in a famous series of caricatures.] If they had been contemporaries of Rabelais, they would have treated him as a base and uncouth buffoon. In truth, then, have we got to show that nothing at all that issues from man is frivolous in the eyes of a philosopher? Surely, at the very least, there will be

that obscure and mysterious element which no philosophy has so far analyzed to its depths?

We are going to concern ourselves, then, with the essence of laughter and with the component elements of caricature. Later, perhaps, we shall examine some of the most remarkable works produced in this genre.

II

The Sage laughs not save in fear and trembling. From what authority-laden lips, from what completely orthodox pen, did this strange and striking maxim fall? Does it come to us from the Philosopher-King of Judea? Or should we attribute it to Joseph de Maistre, that soldier quickened with the Holy Spirit? I have a vague memory of having read it in one of his books, but given as a quotation, no doubt. Such severity of thought and style suits well with the majestic saintliness of Bossuet; but the elliptical turn of the thought and its quintessential refinement would lead me rather to attribute the honour to Bourdaloue, the relentless Christian psychologist. This singular maxim has kept recurring to my mind ever since I first conceived the idea of my article, and I wanted to get rid of it at the very start.

But come, let us analyze this curious proposition—

The Sage, that is to say he who is quickened with the spirit of Our Lord, he who has the divine formulary at his finger tips, does not abandon himself to laughter save in fear and trembling. The Sage trembles at the thought of having laughed; the Sage fears laughter, just as he fears the lustful shows of

this world. He stops short on the brink of laughter, as on the brink of temptation. There is, then, according to the Sage, a certain secret contradiction between his special nature as Sage and the primordial nature of laughter. In fact, to do no more than touch in passing upon memories which are more than solemn, I would point out—and this perfectly corroborates the officially Christian character of the maxim—that the Sage *par excellence*, the Word Incarnate, never laughed. [note: This suggests a line in a poem by Baudelaire's friend Gustave le Vavas seur, published in 1843. *Dieux joyeux, je vous hais. Jesus na jamais ri.*] In the eyes of One who has all knowledge and all power, the comic does not exist. And yet the Word Incarnate knew anger; He even knew tears.

Let us make a note of this, then. In the first place, here is an author—a Christian, without doubt—who considers it as a certain fact that the Sage takes a very good look before allowing himself to laugh, as though some residue of uneasiness and anxiety must still be left him. And secondly, the comic vanishes altogether from the point of view of absolute knowledge and power. Now, if we inverted the two propositions, it would result that laughter is generally the appanage of madmen, and that it always implies more or less of ignorance and weakness. I have no wish, however, to embark recklessly upon a theological ocean, for which I should without doubt be insufficiently equipped with compass or sails; I am content just to indicate these singular horizons to the reader—to point them out to him with my finger.

If you are prepared, then, to take the point of view of the orthodox mind, it is certain that human laughter is intimately linked with the accident of an

ancient Fall, of a debasement both physical and moral. Laughter and grief are expressed by the organs in which the command and the knowledge of good and evil reside—I mean the eyes and the mouth. In the earthly paradise—whether one supposes it as past or to come, a memory or a prophecy, in the sense of the theologians or of the socialists—in the earthly paradise, that is to say in the surroundings in which it seemed to man that all created things were good, joy did not find its dwelling in laughter. As no trouble afflicted him, man's countenance was simple and smooth, and the laughter which now shakes the nations never distorted the features of his face. Laughter and tears cannot make their appearance in the paradise of delights. They are both equally the children of woe, and they came because the body of enfeebled man lacked the strength to restrain them. [note: Philippe de Chennevieres, an early friend of Baudelaire's. He wrote a number of books, and had a distinguished career in the official world of art. The exact source of this idea has not been traced among his works.] From the point of view of my Christian philosopher, the laugh on his lips is a sign of just as great a misery as the tears in his eyes. The Being who sought to multiply his own image has in no wise put the teeth of the lion into the mouth of man yet man rends with his laughter; nor all the seductive cunning of the serpent into his eyes—yet he beguiles with his tears. Observe also that it is with his tears that man washes the afflictions of man, and that it is with his laughter that sometimes he soothes and charms his heart; for the phenomena engendered by the Fall will become the means of redemption.

May I be permitted a poetic hypothesis in order to help me prove the accuracy of these assertions, which otherwise many people may find tainted with the a priori of mysticism? Since the comic is a damnable element, and

one of diabolic origin, let us try to imagine before us a soul absolutely pristine and fresh, so to speak, from the hands of Nature. For our example let us take the great and typical figure of Virginie, who perfectly symbolizes absolute purity and naiveté. [note: From Bemardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*] Virginie arrives in Paris still bathed in sea-mists and gilded by the tropic sun, her eyes full of great primitive images of waves, mountains and forests. Here she falls into the midst of a turbulent, overflowing and mephitic civilization, all imbued as she is with the pure and rich scents of the East. She is linked to humanity both by her birth and her love, by her mother and her lover, her Paul, who is as angelic as she and whose sex knows no distinction from hers, so to speak, in the unquenched ardors of a love which is unaware of itself. God she has known in the church of *Les Pamplemousses*—a. modest and mean little church, and in the vastness of the indescribable tropic sky and the immortal music of the forests and the torrents. Certainly Virginie is a noble intelligence; but a few images and a few memories suffice her, just as a few books suffice the Sage. Now one day by chance, in all innocence, at the Palais-Royal, at a glazier's window, on a table, in a public place, Virginie's eye falls upon—a caricature! a caricature all very tempting for us, full-blown with gall and spite, just such as a shrewd and bored civilization knows how to make them. Let us suppose some broad buffoonery of the prizing, some British enormity, full of clotted blood and spiced with a monstrous '*Goddam!*' or two: or, if this is more to the taste of your curious imagination, let us suppose before the eye of our virginal Virginie some charming and enticing morsel of lubricity, a Gavarni of her times, and one of the best—some insulting satire against the follies of the court, some plastic diatribe against the Parc-aux-Cerfs, [note: Louis XV's private brothel at Versailles.] the vile activities of a great favourite, or the

nocturnal escapades of the proverbial *Autrichienne* [note: Marie Antoinette]. Caricature is a double thing; it is both drawing and idea—the drawing violent, the idea caustic and veiled. And a network of such elements gives trouble to a simple mind which is accustomed to understand by intuition things as simple as itself. Virginie has glimpsed; now she gazes. Why? She is gazing at the unknown. Nevertheless she hardly understands either what it means or what it is for. And yet, do you observe that sudden folding of the wings, that shudder of a soul that veils herself and wants to draw back? The angel has sensed that there is offence in it. And in truth, I tell you, whether she has understood it or not, she will be left with some strange element of uneasiness—something which resembles fear. No doubt, if Virginie remains in Paris and knowledge comes to her, laughter will come too: we shall see why. But for the moment, in our capacity as analysts and critics who would certainly not dare to assert that our intelligence is superior to that of Virginie, let us simply record the fear and the suffering of the immaculate angel brought face to face with caricature.

III

If you wished to demonstrate that the comic is one of the clearest tokens of the Satanic in man, one of the numerous pips contained in the symbolic apple, it would be enough to draw attention to the unanimous agreement of physiologists of laughter on the primary ground of this monstrous phenomenon. Nevertheless their discovery is not very profound and hardly goes very far. Laughter, they say, comes from superiority. I should not be surprised if, on making this discovery, the physiologist had burst out laughing himself at the thought of his own superiority. Therefore he should

have said: Laughter comes from the idea of one's own superiority. A Satanic idea, if there ever was one! And what pride and delusion! For it is a notorious fact that all the madmen in the asylums have an excessively overdeveloped idea of their own superiority: I hardly know of any who suffer from the madness of humility. Note, too, that laughter is one of the most frequent and numerous expressions of madness. And now, see how everything falls into place. When Virginie, once fallen, has declined by one degree in purity, the idea of her own superiority will begin to dawn upon her; she will be more learned from the point of view of the world; and she will laugh.

I said that laughter contained a symptom of failing; and, in fact, what more striking token of debility could you demand than a nervous convulsion, an involuntary spasm comparable to a sneeze and prompted by the sight of someone else's misfortune? This misfortune is almost always a mental failing. And can you imagine a phenomenon more deplorable than one failing taking delight in another? But there is worse to follow. The misfortune is sometimes of a very much lower kind—a failure in the physical order. To take one of the most commonplace examples in life, what is there so delightful in the sight of a man falling on the ice or in the street, or stumbling at the end of a pavement, that the countenance of his brother in Christ should contract in such an intemperate manner, and the muscles of his face should suddenly leap into life like a timepiece at midday or a clockwork toy? The poor devil has disfigured himself, at the very least; he may even have broken an essential member. Nevertheless the laugh has gone forth, sudden and irrepressible. It is certain that if you care to explore this situation, you will find a certain unconscious pride at the core of the

laughter's thought. That is the point of departure. 'Look at me! I am not falling,' he seems to say. 'Look at me! I am walking upright. I would never be so silly as to fail to see a gap in the pavement or a cobblestone blocking the way.'

The Romantic school, or, to put it better, the Satanic school, which is one of its subdivisions, had a proper understanding of this primordial law of laughter; or at least, if they did not all understand it, all, even in their grossest extravagances and exaggerations, sensed it and applied it exactly. All the miscreants of melodrama, accursed, damned and fatally marked with a grin which runs from ear to ear, are in the pure orthodoxy of laughter. Furthermore they are almost all the grand-children, legitimate or illegitimate, of the renowned wanderer Melmoth, [note: Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) was the masterpiece of its author, the Rev. C. R. Maturin (1782-1824). It was one of the most influential of all the novels of horror, and Baudelaire's great admiration for it was revealed in his desire to make a new French translation, on the grounds that the existing translation was inadequate] that great Satanic creation of the Reverend Maturin. What could be greater, what more mighty, relative to poor humanity, than the pale, bored figure of Melmoth? And yet he has a weak and contemptible side to him, which faces against God and against the light. See, therefore, how he laughs; see how he laughs, as he ceaselessly compares himself to the caterpillars of humanity, he so strong, he so intelligent, he for whom a part of the conditional laws of mankind, both physical and intellectual, no longer exist! And this laughter is the perpetual explosion of his rage and his suffering. It is—you must understand—the necessary resultant of his contradictory double nature, which is infinitely great in relation to man, and infinitely vile and base in

relation to absolute Truth and Justice. Melmoth is a living contradiction. He has parted company with the fundamental conditions of life; his bodily organs can no longer sustain his thought. And that is why his laughter freezes and wrings his entrails. It is a laugh which never sleeps, like a malady which continues on its way and completes a destined course. And thus the laughter of Melmoth, which is the highest expression of pride, is for ever performing its function as it lacerates and scorches the lips of the laugher for whose sins there can be no remission. [note: 'A mirth which is not riot gaiety is often the mask which hides the convulsed and distorted features of agony—and laughter, which never yet was the expression of rapture, has often been the only intelligible language of madness and misery. Ecstasy only smiles—despair laughs...' Melmoth (2nd ed., 1824), vol. III, p. 302.]

IV

And now let us recapitulate a little and establish more clearly our principal propositions, which amount to a sort of theory of laughter. Laughter is satanic: it is thus profoundly human. It is the consequence in man of the idea of his own superiority. And since laughter is essentially human, it is, in fact, essentially contradictory; that is to say that it is at once a token of an infinite grandeur and an infinite misery—the latter in relation to the absolute Being of whom man has an inkling, the former in relation to the beasts. It is from the perpetual collision of these two infinities that laughter is struck. The comic and the capacity for laughter are situated in the laugher and by no means in the object of his laughter. The man who trips would be the last to laugh at his own fall, unless he happened to be a philosopher, one who had

acquired by habit a power of rapid self-division and thus of assisting as a disinterested spectator at the phenomena of his own ego. But such cases are rare. The most comic animals are the most serious monkeys, for example, and parrots. For that matter, if man were to be banished from creation, there would be no such thing as the comic, for the animals do not hold themselves superior to the vegetables, nor the vegetables to the minerals. While it is a sign of superiority in relation to brute creation (and under this heading I include the numerous pariahs of the mind), laughter is a sign of inferiority in relation to the wise, who, through the contemplative innocence of their minds, approach a childlike state. Comparing mankind with man, as we have a right to do, we see that primitive nations, in the same way as Virginie, have no conception of caricature and have no comedy (Holy Books never laugh, to whatever nations they may belong), but that as they advance little by little in the direction of the cloudy peaks of the intellect, or as they pore over the gloomy braziers of metaphysics, the nations of the world begin to laugh diabolically with the laughter of Melmoth; and finally we see that if, in these selfsame ultra-civilized nations, some mind is driven by superior ambition to pass beyond the limits of worldly pride and to make a bold leap towards pure poetry, then the resulting poetry, as limpid and profound as Nature herself, will be as void of laughter as is the soul of the Sage.

As the comic is a sign of superiority, or of a belief in one's own superiority, it is natural to hold that, before they can achieve the absolute purification promised by certain mystical prophets, the nations of the world will see a multiplication of comic themes in proportion as their superiority increases. But the comic changes its nature, too. In this way the angelic and the diabolic elements function in parallel. As humanity uplifts itself, it wins for

evil, and for the understanding of evil, a power proportionate to that which it has won for good. And this is why I find nothing surprising in the fact that we, who are the children of a better law than the religious laws of antiquity—we, the favored disciples of Jesus—should possess a greater number of comic elements than pagan antiquity. For this very thing is a condition of our general intellectual power. I am quite prepared for sworn dissenters to cite the classic tale of the philosopher who died of laughing when he saw a donkey eating figs, or even the comedies of Aristophanes and those of Plautus. I would reply that, quite apart from the fact that these periods were essentially civilized, and there had already been a considerable shrinkage of belief, their type of the comic is still not quite the same as ours. It even has a touch of barbarity about it, and we can really only adopt it by a backward effort of mind, the result of which is called *pastiche*. As for the grotesque figures which antiquity has bequeathed us—the masks, the bronze figurines, the Hercules (all muscles), the little Priapi, with tongue curled in air and pointed ears (all cranium and phallus); and as for those prodigious phalluses on which the white daughters of Romulus innocently ride astride, those monstrous engines of generation, equipped with wings and bells—I believe that these things are all full of deep seriousness. Venus, Pan and Hercules were in no sense figures of fun. It was not until after the coming of Christ, and with the aid of Plato and Seneca, that men began to laugh at them. I believe that the ancients were full of respect for drum-majors and for doers of mighty deeds of all kinds, and that none of those extravagant fetishes which I instanced a moment ago were anything other than tokens of adoration, or, at all events, symbols of power; in no sense were they intentionally comic emanations of the fancy. Indian and Chinese idols are

unaware that they are ridiculous; it is in us. Christians, that their comicality resides.

V

It would be a mistake to suppose that we have got rid of every difficulty. The mind that is least accustomed to these aesthetic subtleties would very quickly be able to counter me with the insidious objection that there are *different varieties of laughter*. It is not always a disaster, a failing or an inferiority in which we take our delight. Many sights which provoke our laughter are perfectly innocent; not only the amusements of childhood, but even many of the things that tickle the palate of artists, have nothing to do with the spirit of Satan.

There is certainly some semblance of truth in that. But first of all we ought to make a proper distinction between laughter and joy. Joy exists in itself, but it has various manifestations. Sometimes it is almost invisible; at others, it expresses itself in tears. Laughter is only an expression, a symptom, a diagnostic. Symptom of what? That is the question. Joy is a unity. Laughter is the expression of a double, or contradictory, feeling; and that is the reason why a convulsion occurs. And so, the laughter of children, which I hold for a vain objection, is altogether different, even as a physical expression, even as a form, from the laughter of a man who attends a play, or who looks at a caricature, or from the terrible laughter of Melmoth —of Melmoth, the outcast of society, wandering somewhere between the last boundaries of the territory of mankind and the frontiers of the higher life; of Melmoth, who always believes himself to be on the point of freedom from his infernal pact,

and longs without ceasing to barter that superhuman power, which is his disaster, for the pure conscience of a simpleton, which is his envy. For the laughter of children is like the blossoming of a flower. It is the joy of receiving, the joy of breathing, the joy of contemplating, of living, of growing. It is a vegetable joy. And so, in general, it is more like a smile—something analogous to the wagging of a dog's tail, or the purring of a cat. And if there still remains some distinction between the laughter of children and such expressions of animal contentment, I think that we should hold that this is because their laughter is not entirely exempt from ambition, as is only proper to little scraps of men—that is, to budding Satans.

But there is one case where the question is more complicated. It is the laughter of man—but a true and violent laughter—at the sight of an object which is neither a sign of weakness nor of disaster among his fellows. It is easy to guess that I am referring to the laughter caused by the grotesque. Fabulous creations, beings whose authority and *raison d'être* cannot be drawn from the code of common sense, often provoke in us an insane and excessive mirth, which expresses itself in interminable paroxysms and swoons. It is clear that a distinction must be made, and that here we have a higher degree of the phenomenon. From the artistic point of view, the comic is an imitation: the grotesque a creation. The comic is an imitation mixed with a certain creative faculty, that is to say with an artistic *ideality*. Now human pride, which always takes the upper hand and is the natural cause of laughter in the case of the comic, turns out to be the natural cause of laughter in the case of the grotesque too, for this is a creation mixed with a certain imitative faculty—imitative, that is, of elements pre-existing in nature. I mean that in this case laughter is still the expression of an idea of

superiority—no longer now of man over man, but of man over nature. Do not retort that this idea is too subtle; that would be no sufficient reason for rejecting it. The difficulty is to find another plausible explanation. If this one seems far-fetched and just a little hard to accept, that is because the laughter caused by the grotesque has about it something profound, primitive and axiomatic, which is much closer to the innocent life and to absolute joy than is the laughter caused by the comic in man's behavior. Setting aside the question of utility, there is the same difference between these two sorts of laughter as there is between the *implicated* school of writing and the school of art for art's sake. Thus the grotesque dominates the comic from a proportionate height.

From now onwards I shall call the grotesque 'the absolute comic', in antithesis to the ordinary comic, which I shall call 'the significative comic'. The latter is a clearer language, and one easier for the man in the street to understand, and above all easier to analyze, its element being visibly double—art and the moral idea. But the absolute comic, which comes much closer to nature, emerges as a unity which calls for the intuition to grasp it. There is but one criterion of the grotesque, and that is laughter—immediate laughter. Whereas with the significative comic it is quite permissible to laugh a moment late—that is no argument against its validity; it all depends upon one's quickness of analysis.

I have called it 'the absolute comic'. Nevertheless we should be on our guard. From the point of view of the definitive absolute, all that remains is joy. The comic can only be absolute in relation to fallen humanity, and it is in this way that I am understanding it.

VI

In its triple-distilled essence the absolute comic turns out to be the prerogative of those superior artists whose minds are sufficiently open to receive any absolute ideas at all. Thus, the man who until now has been the most sensitive to these ideas, and who set a good part of them in action in his purely aesthetic, as well as his creative work, is Theodore Hoffmann. He always made a proper distinction between the ordinary comic and the type which he called 'the innocent comic'. The learned theories which he had put forth didactically, or thrown out in the form of inspired conversations or critical dialogues, he often sought to boil down into creative works; and it is from these very works that I shall shortly draw my most striking examples when I come to give a series of applications of the above stated principles, and to pin a sample under each categorical heading.

Furthermore, within the absolute and significative types of the comic we find species, sub-species and families. The division can take place on different grounds. First of all it can be established according to a pure philosophic law, as I was making a start to do: and then according to the law of artistic creation. The first is brought about by the primary separation of the absolute from the significative comic; the second is based upon the kind of special capacities possessed by each artist. And finally it is also possible to establish a classification of varieties of the comic with regard to climates and various national aptitudes. It should be observed that each term of each classification can be completed and given a nuance by the adjunction of a term from one of the others, just as the law of grammar teaches us to modify

a noun by an adjective. Thus, any German or English artist is more or less naturally equipped for the absolute comic, and at the same time he is more or less of an idealizer. I wish now to try and give selected examples of the absolute and significative comic, and briefly to characterize the comic spirit proper to one or two eminently artistic nations, before coming on to the section in which I want to discuss and analyze at greater length the talent of those men who have made it their study and their whole existence.

If you exaggerate and push the consequences of the significative comic to their furthest limits, you reach the savage variety, just as the synonymous expression of the innocent variety, pushed one degree further, is the *absolute* comic.

In France, the land of lucid thought and demonstration, where the natural and direct aim of art is utility, we generally find the significative type. In this genre Moliere is our best expression. But since at the root of our character there is an aversion for all extremes, and since one of the symptoms of every emotion, every science and every art in France is an avoidance of the excessive, the absolute and the profound, there is consequently but little of the savage variety to be found in this country; in the same way our grotesque seldom rises to the absolute.

Rabelais, who is the great French master of the grotesque, preserves an element of utility and reason in the very midst of his most prodigious fantasies. He is directly symbolic. His comedy nearly always possesses the transparency of an allegory. In French caricature, in the plastic expression of the comic, we shall find this dominant spirit. It must be admitted that the

enormous poetic good humor which is required for the true grotesque is found but rarely among us in level and continuous doses. At long intervals we see the vein reappear; but it is not an essentially national one. In this context I should mention certain interludes of Moliere, which are unfortunately too little read or acted—those of the *Malade Imaginaire* and the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, for example; and the camivalesque figures of Callot. As for the essentially French comedy in the *Contes* of Voltaire, its *raison d'etre* is always based upon the idea of superiority; it is entirely significative.

Germany, sunk in her dreams, will afford us excellent specimens of the absolute comic. There all is weighty, profound and excessive. To find true comic savagery, however, you have to cross the Channel and visit the foggy realms of spleen. Happy, noisy, carefree Italy abounds in the innocent variety. It was at the very heart of Italy, at the hub of the southern carnival, in the midst of the turbulent Corso, that Theodore Hoffmann discerningly placed his eccentric drama *The Princess Brambilla*. The Spaniards are very well endowed in this matter. They are quick to arrive at the cruel stage, and their most grotesque fantasies often contain a dark element.

It will be a long time before I forget the first English pantomime that I saw played. It was some years ago, at the *Theatre des Varietes*. Doubtless only a few people will remember it, for very few seem to have taken to this kind of theatrical diversion, and those poor English mimes had a sad reception from us. The French public does not much like to be taken out of its element. Its taste is not very cosmopolitan, and changes of horizon upset its vision. Speaking for myself, however, I was excessively struck by their way of

understanding the comic. It was said—chiefly by the indulgent, in order to explain their lack of success—that these were vulgar, mediocre artists—understudies. But that was not the point. They were English; that was the important thing.

It seemed to me that the distinctive mark of this type of the comic was *violence*. I propose to prove it with a few samples from my memories.

First of all, Pierrot was not the figure to which the late lamented Deburau had accustomed us—that figure pale as the moon, mysterious as silence, supple and mute as the serpent, long and straight as a gibbet—that artificial man activated by eccentric springs. The English Pierrot swept upon us like a hurricane, fell down like a sack of coals, and when he laughed his laughter made the auditorium quake; his laugh was like a joyful clap of thunder. He was a short, fat man, and to increase his imposingness he wore a beribboned costume which encompassed his jubilant person as birds are encompassed with their down and feathers, or angoras with their fur. Upon his floured face he had stuck, crudely and without transition or gradation, two enormous patches of pure red. A feigned prolongation of the lips, by means of two bands of carmine, brought it about that when he laughed his mouth seemed to run from ear to ear.

As for his moral nature, it was basically the same as that of the Pierrot whom we all know—heedlessness and indifference, and consequently the gratification of every kind of greedy and rapacious whim, now at the expense of Harlequin, now of Cassandra or Leander. The only difference

was that where Deburau would just have moistened the tip of his finger with his tongue, he stuck both fists and both feet into his mouth.

And everything else in this singular piece was expressed in the same way, with passionate gusto; it was the dizzy height of hyperbole.

Pierrot walks past a woman who is scrubbing her doorstep; after rifling her pockets, he makes to stuff into his own her sponge, her mop, her bucket, water and all! As for the way in which he endeavored to express his love to her, anyone who remembers observing the phanerogamous habits of the monkeys in their famous cage at the *Jardin des Plantes* can imagine it for himself. Perhaps I ought to add that the woman's role was taken by a very long, very thin man, whose outraged modesty emitted shrill screams. It was truly an intoxication of laughter—something both terrible and irresistible.

For some misdeed or other, Pierrot had in the end to be guillotined. Why the guillotine rather than the gallows, in the land of Albion? ... I do not know; presumably to lead up to what we were to see next. Anyway, there it was, the engine of death, there, set up on the French boards which were markedly surprised at this romantic novelty. After struggling and bellowing like an ox that scents the slaughter-house, at last Pierrot bowed to his fate. His head was severed from his neck—a great red and white head, which rolled noisily to rest in front of the prompter's box, showing the bleeding disk of the neck, the split vertebrae and all the details of a piece of butcher's meat just dressed for the counter. And then, all of a sudden, the decapitated trunk, moved by its irresistible obsession with theft, jumped to its feet, triumphantly 'lifted' its

own head as though it was a ham or a bottle of wine, and, with far more circumspection than the great St. Denis, proceeded to stuff it into its pocket¹

Set down in pen and ink, all this is pale and chilly. But how could the pen rival the pantomime? The pantomime is the refinement, the quintessence of comedy; it is the pure comic element, purged and concentrated. Therefore, with the English actors' special talent for hyperbole, all these monstrous buffooneries took on a strangely thrilling reality.

Certainly one of the most remarkable things, in the sense of absolute comedy—or if I may call it so, the metaphysics of absolute comedy—was the beginning of this beautiful piece, a prologue filled with a high aesthetic. The principal characters, Pierrot, Cassandra, Harlequin, Colombine and Leander are facing the public, gentle and good as gold. They are all but rational beings and do not differ much from the fine fellows in the audience. The miraculous breath which is about to inspire them to such extraordinary antics has not yet touched their brains. A few quips from Pierrot can give no more than a pale idea of what he will be doing shortly. The rivalry between Harlequin and Leander has just declared itself. A fairy tales Harlequin's side; she is the eternal protectress of mortals who are poor and in love. She promises him her protection, and, to give him immediate proof of it, she waves her wand in the air with a mysterious and authoritative gesture.

At once a dizzy intoxication is abroad; intoxication swims in the air; we breathe intoxication; it is intoxication that fills the lungs and renews the blood in the arteries.

What is this intoxication? It is the absolute comic, and it has taken charge of each one of them. The extraordinary gestures executed by Leander, Pierrot and Cassandra make it quite clear that they feel themselves forcibly projected into a new existence. They do not seem at all put out. They set about preparing for the great disasters and the tumultuous destiny which awaits them, like a man who spits on his hands and rubs them together before doing some heroic deed. They flourish their arms, like windmills lashed by the tempest. It must be to loosen their joints—and they will certainly need it. All this is carried out to great gusts of laughter, full of a huge contentment. Then they turn to a game of leap-frog, and once their aptitude and their agility have been duly registered, there follows a dazzling volley of kicks, punches and slaps which blaze and crash like a battery of artillery. But all of this is done in the best of spirits. Every gesture, every cry, every look seems to be saying: 'The fairy has willed it, and our fate hurls us on—it doesn't worry me! Come, let's get started! Let's get down to business!' And then they do get down to business, through the whole fantastic work, which, properly speaking, only starts at this point—that is to say, on the frontier of the marvelous.

Under cover of this hysteria, Harlequin and Colombine have danced away in flight, and with an airy foot they proceed to run the gauntlet of their adventures.

And now another example. This one is taken from a singular author—a man of ranging mind, whatever may be said, who unites to the significative mockery of France the mad, sparkling, lighthearted gaiety of the lands of the

sun as well as the profound comic spirit of Germany. I am returning once again to Hoffmann.

In the story entitled *Daucus Carota, the King of the Carrots*, or by some translators *The King's Betrothed*, no sight could be more beautiful than the arrival of the great company of the Carrots in the farm-yard of the betrothed maiden's home. Look at all those little scarlet figures, like a regiment of English soldiers, with enormous green plumes on their heads, like carriage-footmen, going through a series of marvelous tricks and capers on their little horses! The whole thing is carried out with astonishing agility. The adroitness and ease with which they fall on their heads is assisted by their heads being bigger and heavier than the rest of their bodies, like those toy soldiers made of elder-pith, which have lead weights in their caps.

The unfortunate young girl, obsessed with dreams of grandeur, is fascinated by this display of military might. But an army on parade is one thing; how different an army in barracks, furbishing its arms, polishing its equipment, or, worse still, ignobly snoring on its dirty, stinking camp beds! That is the reverse of the medal; the rest was but a magic trick, an apparatus of seduction. But her father, who is a wise man and well versed in sorcery, wants to show her the other side of all this magnificence. Thus, at an hour when the vegetables are sleeping their brutish sleep, never suspecting that any spy could catch them unawares, he lifts the flap of one of the tents of this splendid army. Then it is that the poor dreaming girl sees all this mass of red and green soldiery in its appalling undress, wallowing and snoring in the filthy midden from which it first emerged. In its night-cap all that military magnificence is nothing more than a putrid swamp.

There are many other examples of the absolute comic that I might take from the admirable Hoffmann. Anyone who really wants to understand what I have in mind should read with care *Daucus Carota*, *Peregrinus Tyss*, *The Golden Pot*, and over and above all, *The Princess Brambilla*, which is like a catechism of high aesthetics. What pre-eminently distinguishes Hoffmann is his unintentional—and sometimes very intentional—blending of a certain measure of the significative comic with the most absolute variety. His most supernatural and fugitive comic conceptions, which are often like the visions of a drunken man, have a very conspicuous moral meaning; you might imagine that you had to do with the profoundest type of physiologist or alienist who was amusing himself by clothing his deep wisdom in poetic forms, like a learned man who might speak in parables and allegories.

Take for example, if you will, the character of Giglio Fava, the actor who suffered from a chronic dualism, in *The Princess Brambilla*. This single character changes personality from time to time. Under the name of Giglio Fava he swears enmity for the Assyrian prince, Comelio Chiapperi; but when he is himself the Assyrian prince, he pours forth his deepest and the most regal scorn upon his rival for the hand of the Princess—upon a wretched mummer whose name, they say, is Giglio Fava.

I should perhaps add that one of the most distinctive marks of the absolute comic is that it remains unaware of itself. This is evident not only in certain animals, like monkeys, in whose comicality gravity plays an essential part, nor only in certain antique sculptural caricatures of which I have already spoken, but even in those Chinese monstrosities which delight us so much

and whose intentions are far less comic than people generally think. A Chinese idol, although it be an object of veneration, looks very little different from a tumble-toy or a pot-bellied chimney-ornament.

And so, to be finished with all these subtleties and all these definitions, let me point out, once more and for the last time, that the dominant idea of superiority is found in the absolute, no less than in the significative comic, as I have already explained (at too great a length, perhaps): further, that in order to enable a comic emanation, explosion, or, as it were, a chemical separation of the comic to come about, there must be two beings face to face with one another: again, that the special abode of the comic is in the laughter, the spectator: and finally, that an exception must nevertheless be made in connection with the ‘law of ignorance’ for those men who have made a business of developing in themselves their feeling for the comic, and of dispensing it for the amusement of their fellows. This last phenomenon comes into the class of all artistic phenomena which indicate the existence of a permanent dualism in the human being—that is, the power of being oneself and someone else at one and the same time.

And so, to return to my primary definitions and to express myself more clearly, I would say that when Hoffmann gives birth to the absolute comic it is perfectly true that he knows what he is doing; but he also knows that the essence of this type of the comic is that it should appear to be unaware of itself and that it should produce in the spectator, or rather the reader, a joy in his own superiority and in the superiority of man over nature. Artists create the comic; after collecting and studying its elements, they know that such-and-such a being is comic, and that it is so only on condition of its being

unaware of its nature, in the same way that, following an inverse law, an artist is only an artist on condition that he is a double man and that there is not one single phenomenon of his double nature of which he is ignorant.

On the Essence of Laughter and, in General, on the Comic in the Plastic Arts, Le Portfeuille, 8 July 1855

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